This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

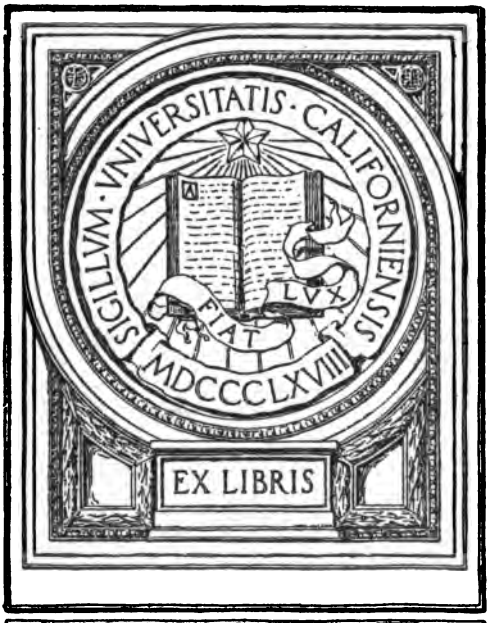
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

West Broadway

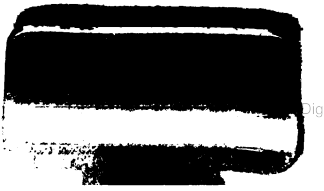
NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

Digitized by Google

GIFT OF
M. G. Luck



961
P992
W



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WEST BROADWAY

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WEST BROADWAY

BY

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM

AUTHOR OF "IT PAYS TO SMILE," "ADAM'S GARDEN," "THE IMPOSSIBLE BOY," ETC.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

Digitized by Google

GIFT OF M. G. LUCK

COPYRIGHT, 1921,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1921, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Digitized by Google

WEST BROADWAY

Digitized by Google

TO MY PUBLIC, WHICH ON SCREEN OR STAGE, IN CABARET OR PARLOR ACT HAS BEEN SO KIND TO ME

DEAR PUBLIC: *Deep in every person's mind is the idea that they could write a book if only they was to take the trouble and the time off, and motion-picture actresses are no exception to this great general human weakness.*

So I have written this book. Not alone for the publicity, but to express something that was in my heart, and because my manager asked me to write it. It is the story of how I bought a dictionary and discovered America; of how I went out to teach and of what I learned instead. Please excuse mistakes in spelling, grammar, and ectera. There are no mistakes in what I have to tell you about your country. It has been like trying to write the Bible, and having to do it in slang.

Yours resp'fully

MARIE LA TOUR.

December 28, 1920.

Digitized by Google

WEST BROADWAY

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

I

AFTER a severe attack of thinking I have come to realize how true is the poet's word, A Little Education Can Start a Hell of a Lot of Trouble. Do you get me? Like a dose of medicine it has got to be measured right to have a real desirable effect. Take too little and it only sort of makes you sick; take too much and you will be worse off than before. And I have come also to realize that what ails a good part of this country to-day is a little education. We got a small dose and it ain't working either one way or another, which is maybe rather a rough thing for one which is at once a lady, a mother and a admittedly great actress like myself to say, but then all great truths are more or less rough.

Anyways, it is a clear, general statement, which is a dangerous thing to make, and I wouldn't make one that was not based on personal observation, and this one is based on several weeks of it.

Yet believe me I don't intend to knock education too severe; not by a long shot, I don't; and it was feeling my own lack of it that sent me out on the trip which furnished what the scenario department calls the meat for this script. I am perfectly willing to admit that some brands of education are all right in their way and are undoubtedly responsible for the invention of the telephone, massage creams, motion-picture cameras and important things which I per-

M41885

Digitized by Google

sonally myself would find it hard to get along without. The kind of education which has got me worried is that old soldier General Education who has gone and pinned an alias on himself of Culture. Culture is right—that's what they call one of those high-priced operations where they graft on a piece of somebody else's skin—do you get the idea? Well, keep hold of it then while I tell you what started me on the road to this profound conclusion, and like most troubles it centered about the home—my home in this particular case, and Al Goldringer trying to pry me out of it; and, of course, I being a perfectly normal woman was delighted to be pried, only not quite in the way he wanted.

You see, considering the amount of money which has passed between Al and I since first he begun making pictures with me, we are really remarkably friendly, and no other producer could tempt me away from him at twice the salary, even if they had the money, which of course they haven't, and everybody knows that Goldringer's Kosmic Krackerjack Releases are the biggest money-makers on the market to-day, even if their ads do admit it.

Well, anyways, Al and I are, for manager and star, on the best of terms; but I always get the terms down in black and white over his signature just the same, which is maybe one reason why we continue friendly. Believe me, it's a poor thing to do business with a friend; but a friend which you make through doing business is quite another matter, and one of the best kind you can make, and Al is one of those. And so naturally when he rang up and said that if I was to try and force my way into his office he'd be there, why, I said all right I'd make the effort, and he says when, and I says two o'clock prompt, and he says alright he would expect me by five, sure, and hung up.

When he had done so I went and put a marker in the book which I was reading to improve myself for Junior's sake.

Digitized by Google

It was by a bird named Charles Lamb and was called the Essays of Elia, and believe me it was a job I was not altogether unwilling to lay off of. One thing I will say about that book, however—the one who wrote it will never be able to sell the picture rights, I don't care if it is famous. I may not know much about art, but I know what will screen and this fellow Lamb don't. Well, anyways, I put a marker in it, because otherwise I would never of found my place again, and then I went and gave myself a careful inspection in the mirror and near-privacy of my boudoir. I never get a call but that I rush for the mirror right afterward to see is my face still there—I mean still good for the silver sheet; and any actor or actress will know how I feel, and this lack of full confidence in myself is probably what makes me the great artist that I am.

Well, I pulled up both the window shades and made the examination thorough, but without disastrous results, or in other words, a single line anywheres, and found myself still perfectly good for a full close-up in spite of a six months' old baby and a husband that was working with another woman. And while I was examining my front teeth in walks ma without knocking, and that's all the privacy I get, and you know how it feels when anybody catches you doing a thing like that which is one of the disadvantages of relatives.

"Ma Gilligan," I says, turning on her in my pink kimono and a good deal of annoyance—"Ma Gilligan, how many times have I told you that this is my room?"

"Well, dearie," says ma, "I ain't going to take it away. I only want to tell you that nurse of yours is putting your child outdoors to sleep in the rain."

"Well, what of it?" I says. "You know he always sleeps out. How many times have I told you she's a trained nurse and not to interfere with her?"

"Well, I don't know who trained her," says ma, very

Digitized by Google

indignant. "But I never raised you any such crazy way. Trained! Huh! Trained monkey!"

"Now, ma, just you keep your mind off your past," I says. "This is no circus, but a modern New York home," I says, "and what is more, I'm running it."

"That's right! Lay onto your poor old ma which don't know anything!" says she. "It ain't my flat and I wouldn't interfere for worlds! What you do ain't none of my business. Are you goin' out?"

"Yes," says I, taking down a pussyfoot-silk street dress with no neck or sleeves or very much skirt, but the latest effort of Paris, Broadway & Co.

"Where you goin'?" says ma.

"To the studio," I says brief.

There was no reason why I shouldn't of gone into details except that she was my relation and living with me, and anybody who has the same conditions will understand. You just got to keep something to yourself, whether it's a secret or not.

"Well, what for?" says ma.

"I don't know," I says, exasperated with home life and lying unnecessarily.

"When will you be home?" ma goes on.

"I don't know that either!" I snapped. "Can't I do anything except under a magnifying glass?"

"Leave me tell you, Mary Gilligan Smith La Tour," says ma, putting her hands on her hips in her no-nonsense manner—"leave me tell you that ain't the way to talk to your mommer! You're getting too big in the head, you are, and I've a good mind to turn you over my knee and hit you a few licks where it would do you the most good."

And with that she turned away and marched out of my room, which was what I wanted, only it left me no chance to answer. But it being by then ten minutes to two o'clock and Al's office more than half an hour away, I stopped not

Digitized by Google

to heed her, as the poet says, but slipped and struggled into the pussyfoot, a sweet little costume the color—on the word of the saleslady—of elephant's breath; added a ostrich feather toque which looked like a big yellow chrysantheum that somebody had sat on, and being then arrayed in that latest cruelty of style known as a robe pneumonia, I went down and humped myself into a corner of the waiting limousine which was also of the low-necked or pneumonia type, and remained lost in thought while we stuttered through the traffic.

Among other things, I thought how uneducated ma is, and felt sorry for her as only a daughter could. Among all the daughters who have regarded their ma with sorrowful kindly pity, I probably was as condescending and sympathetic as any. Of course, I fully appreciate ma and her good sense on all the subjects which I agree with her on, and she certainly done a fine job with me, and only for her I would not be where I am to-day. But ma had a lot of weak points which was not her fault but her misfortune, and for all my love, nobody appreciated them better than I.

For one thing, she was awful out of date and showed no signs of wishing to catch up. And for another, she was dreadfully uneducated—her grammar was certainly something fierce! This worried me a lot, because in about a year and a half Junior would be talking, and when he learned I wanted to learn him to talk right, and ma sure did promise to be a awful influence. I had never noticed ma's talk in the old days before the baby come, except to realize that it didn't have quite the pep that it might of. Nor did I think much about education either for her or Jim or even for myself, except along the lines of my own work on the stage or screen. But now I realized more every day that one of the hardest things about having a child is that it takes you for an example, and as a rule it is mistaken unless you make it come true. And I realized more than ever

Digitized by Google

that I must improve myself for Junior's sake and pry off a little culture so's it would eventually rub off onto him, and make Jim do the same so the boy need never be ashamed of his parents or pity them or think them old-fashioned. And then I thought of Mr. Chas. Angora Lamb and decided I'd read that book through if it killed me, for my dear son's sake, and then I was brought back to earth by arrival at Al's office at only a quarter to three, which is promptness itself as time is counted in the motion-picture world.

Well, I needn't of hurried so much, because when I got there Al himself was up in the projection room looking at a picture which is how they generally keep a appointment in this man's business. But after two boys had one after another been sent to tell him, why, he remembered his date with me and come down, cigar and all.

"Well, kid, I got a picture for you," he says, shaking hands. "Park yourself in the comfy chair and leave us row over it."

"All right, Al," I says. "Spill the story—I hope it's a good one."

"It's great!" says Al. "High-class script, but snappy and with a swell bedroom scene in it."

"You know I don't make that kind of stuff, Al," I says, "so keep the rest of it to yourself."

"Hold on, don't go!" says Al. "This is a classic. It's called—let me see"—he give a look among the papers—"the title is Romeo and Juliet."

"Oh!" says I. "By William Shakspere?"

"That's him!" says Al. "That's the bird! Well-known English playwright, but the scenario department says he's been dead a long time, so there's no copyright on it, and we can jazz it up a lot to make it screen good."

"Al Goldringer," I says, "where is your education?" I says. "Don't you know Shakspere is a great poet?"

Digitized by Google

"Will we be able to make our titles from the book?" says Al.

"Probably," I says, very much disgusted with his lack of culture. "But what's the use picking on you because you ain't literary? I bet you never read a line of Shakspere in your life!"

"No, I didn't!" says Al with a grin. "Did you?"

"Well, no," I had to admit. "But I know what his leading parts are—Hamlet, Othello, Rosalind, Juliet, Edward the Seventh and—and Ivanhoe. All the old stars play them for Art's Sake about the time they can't put popular stuff across any longer."

"Aw, restrain yourself, Marie!" says Al. "I know Shakspere is a classic, and that while he may be old on the stage, it's new stuff for the silver sheet, and it's a big thing for you—I'm not fooling. We are going to spend five hundred thousand if necessary on this production, and if it's as good as I think it will be we'll do a series of 'em. Bring Shakspere to the people, see? How's that for an idea, eh?"

"Al," I says solemnly, "it's a bird, and as you say, a wonderful chance for me. How did you come to think of it?"

"The scenario department thought of it," says Al. "I only O. K.'d it."

"Well," I says, "it's the best news I've heard in a long time, and fits right in with my ambitions, because no passée actress could get away with Juliet on the screen, and I'll be the first young one on record. Al, I'm going to say a prayer or two for you."

"Better say a dozen for me," says Al with a grin. "And now let's get down to brass contracts. I suppose you think you want some real money for making this."

"Oh, no!" I says. "I'm willing to sacrifice a lot for

Digitized by Google

Art's Sake. I'll take fifty thousand flat and a piece of the picture—say ten on the net royalties."

"You're crazy like a fox," says Al.

And then we was off, Al leading at the post, and for half an hour the storm raged, but in the end we compromised on fifty thousand and a ten per cent. royalty. Al is always like that—he's got to do his regular exercises or he don't feel healthy. And when it was all settled we come down to the cast.

"Now about Romeo," says Al. "At the contract you're getting you ought to throw in Jim's services so I can bill a double-header."

"Play opposite my husband when he could be making a separate picture at the same time and twice the money?" I says. "Not much!" I says. "And what is further, Al, for over a year now he's been working with that woman Ruby Roselle, and if you think I'm going to pass up the chance of playing Juliet to the Romeo of some handsome stranger you got to think again."

"You ought to keep your domestic affairs out of our art, girlie," says Al.

"Not in the pictures," I says quickly. "It wouldn't be natural."

"Well, then, we'll use Roman Egler," says Al. "He's kind of a Dago type. When can you be ready to start for the coast?"

Believe me, that was a bolt from the well-known blue! I had never made a picture on the coast in my life, and the suggestion was certainly bad news to me.

"The coast? What d'yer mean coast?" I says. "What ails the Atlantic Coast all of a sudden?"

"We got absolutely no room to make it here," says Al. "Besides, we can do a lot better job at Hollywood. I thought you'd just love to go to sunny California."

Digitized by Google

"Have a heart, Al!" I says. "What do I want with going out to a jay place like that?"

"How do you know it's a jay place?" says Al. "Ever been there?"

"No," I says, "and I don't want to go. I want to stay right here in civilized little old N. Y."

"But you'll like the coast," says Al. "Have you been anywheres besides this man's city?"

"Sure, I have!" I says. "Ain't I played the Audubon Circuit in my past—Rochester, Buffalo, Toronto? And I been in Boston, Trenton and as far south as Philly. I've traveled a lot, Al, and I know there's only one place in America worth living in, and that's the famous village of Manhattan. You can't tell me!"

"I don't attempt to tell a woman anything," says Al, "unless she's working for me. And this picture is going to be made out West."

"Then get somebody else to make it!" I says. "What d'you think I am, a hick? Why, I couldn't stand any place but New York, Al! I got to be at the source of things to get any inspiration for my work. There's only one New York, Al, and I've got to work here. Why, that fillum will take a couple of months to make, and what would I do evenings way out there?"

"Say, where was you born, Miss Broadway?" says Al.

"Bridgeport," I says, "where the circus was when the stork out of the menagerie strolled over to ma's quarters; but I was raised on Avenue A—and raised is right. I raised myself from there to Broadway and Riverside Drive and you know it!"

"I ought to—I helped just a little to put you there," says Al. "And so you ought to realize it's to your advantage to go to the coast."

"Coast!" I says, fed up with the word. "The coast is right here, Al Goldringer—you ought to realize that—

Digitized by Google

the only coast that counts, at least. And I'm going to stay right on it! I'm not going to be parked any place for three months with the engine shut off and get rusty and let my battery die for you or anybody else. Where would I get any new clothes? I'd die, that's what! No, sir, not to speak of the trip out and back! Why, I wouldn't take that trip for worlds!"

"Lots of folks take it for less," says Al.

"But not sister!" says I. "No, Al, if it means leaving the one real town it's all off."

And I got up to go, leaving plenty of time to urge him over to my side between my chair and the door in the true womanly way. But for once I planned in vain.

"Well, don't say that, Mary," says Al firmly. "It's a big proposition—don't turn it down so easy. I give you one week to decide, and the contracts will be ready to sign any time after to-morrow. And when you decide to go give me a call."

"I won't go!" I says. "Certainly not at the money."

"I'll pay expenses," says Al.

"Well, I won't go anyways!" I says. "New York is America so far as I'm concerned, and I want to stay in it. But I'll think it over and say no again at the end of a week if it will make you feel any better."

Well, then I went out of the private office and through the crowd of admiring stenographers, office boys and would-be picture stars who were waiting on the mourners' bench, and was shot down in the elevator to the street level, my mind all scrambled like an egg and hardly knowing what I did want to do anyways. So when I got out onto the street, which was West Fortieth and Sixth, I decided to combine slimness and pleasure, and so I told Rollo the chauffeur, to take the pneumonia car home for a rest and I would walk.

It was the first day of September, but cool and sparkling

Digitized by Google

like a new-style-cut-five-carrot diamond or, in other words, as only little old New York can sparkle. Of course there was some dust and some papers flying around, but in spite of the wind it sure was a grand afternoon; and when I looked at my almost native city through eyes which had just been requested to go away and leave it I seen plainer than ever that there would be nothing stirring, or at least that I would not stir out of it any further than to maybe a road house with a few friends now and then.

Of course, I will say of New York that the administration is fierce, and they say there's lots of graft going on; but that don't affect the wonderful department stores any, does it? And while the pavements on many streets is a disgrace, it's hard to beat Central Park. And no matter what you say against the empire city, you got to admit also that there's only one New York.

Well, anyways, I felt kind of uplifted, and my feet felt almost like they was dancing, and I sure was glad I had decided to stay. I felt I liked everybody and wanted to be kind to them, and when, as I was crossing Bryant Park, I seen a cop chasing some kids off the grass I felt like chasing him for it, but didn't. I only walked on feeling good because it had occurred to me. Do you get me?

Then when I got to Fifth with all the handsome cars and bum old taxis crawling on it, and the people darting in and out between them with no regard to the traffic laws the way they do, and all the general excitement, I decided I would prolong the pleasant agony of a walk on the Avenue by dropping into a bookstore I had seen along there somewheres and buy a couple more pages of condensed culture, because I was getting awful tired of Lamb and kind of hankered after a little mint sauce or currant jelly, or maybe there might be some other animal I could switch to for a change.

So I walked along in the crowd, not meeting even one

Digitized by Google

person I had ever seen before, and ain't it the truth this happens most times when you take a walk in New York? But looking at the shop windows as I went and seeing all the smart things in them was a pleasure in itself, and I also realized, of course, I would never see these things in any other city, nor any such buildings either, nor so many of them. New York is a he-city, where the original inventor of pep and jazz was born—or no, maybe not quite that or he wouldn't of been a real New Yorker, but come there young and adopted the burg, and anyways the town seemed to me like it owned a little over fifty-one per cent of the snap in the whole U. S. A. And that poor fish Al Goldringer wanted me to move out where I could watch the pansies grow! I was fond of Art and anxious to improve mine, and it would be swell to make a production like Juliet and Romeo, because naturally they would have to bill it that way if I was to play the lead, and anyways I never saw a book yet which you couldn't improve on the title of it for picture purposes. And then I got to thinking what a good part it would be for me, and began to feel sort of sick at having to give it up, because I knew Al wouldn't compromise with me about making it at Yonkers, because he runs his business and never lets anybody assist him at it, especially stars. I can get him to change his mind about money, because he always starts the argument all prepared to change it at the right moment —that comes to him natural on account of his pa once running a two-price clothing store down on Grand Street. But on running the studio—nix! He's got the capacity worked out like a freight agent, and you couldn't change his plans with dynamite.

And so I seen my chance to realize the ambition of every actress from sixteen to sixty, make a beautiful fade-out and dissolve into a long-shot of Marie La Tour sitting at home and minding ma so that the trained nurse would

Digitized by Google

be left free to mind the baby, and the way I felt about it, the footage on this scene was a great deal too long. I got fed up with it, even if I had the feature part. And just as I had myself worked up to a high stage of peevishness and irritability because Los Angeles wasn't in Harlem I come to that bookstore that I had remembered noticing which wasn't where it used to be, but a candy store was there instead, and the bookstore was five blocks further anyway, but I had walked that far, so that was all right. And the bookstore had shoved its way into the front of a old private brownstone house the way they do on the Avenue, so that the street level was all plate glass and condensed culture but the upper part still plain private brownstone, the same as most of our fine shops. Not that it matters, because no New Yorker is supposed to rubber at the upper part. Only the hicks do that.

Well, anyways, I went in, and it was the first time I ever went into a bookstore, and judging by the absence of customers I expect I am one of the very few who has had this experience. Far from being like a drug store, which as everybody knows has everything but drugs, this place looked like a regular public library. I'll say it did! Not that I ever was in one myself, the front steps of it during a Liberty Loan being as near as I ever come to one. But what I mean to say is there was no need to go searching at the back of this store for a perscription counter.

And as for the clerks, I'll tell the world they had a hard life! One was giving heavy thought to whether he'd get a manicure or not, and the other two was talking over last night's poker game or national politics or something in a far corner, but not loud enough for a person to hear which. And did they rush up and cover me with attention? They did not! They left me roam about helplessly, and after I had picked up several of the samples that was lying about, beginning with South Sea Sobbings and ending with Dot-

Digitized by Google

tie Dimple at School but none of them appealing to me, I commenced to feel sort of scared and hopeless, because I could see it would be impossible for me to read even one-half of what was in that store. I had commenced too late in life, and I could see plainly that a person was supposed to go all the way from Dottie to Darwin, a writer which was on another table.

But finally I decided, why be scared? It's only a shop, for all they try to make it look like a cross between a tomb and a church, and if it was the Paris Intime and no pink camisoles in sight, why, what would you do? And so having realized this, I acted accordingly, and asked the gentlemanly clerk with the finger nails if he was busy. He right away laid off them and was all politeness.

"At your service," he says, real cultured. "Can I help you in any way?"

"I don't know but maybe I'm beyond help," I admitted. "You see, I want to pry a little general culture off the shelf, and I ain't been able to find anything I can understand or that interests me so far, except a cookbook, and we got one of them."

"I see," says the young man. "Now if you will tell me a little more of what your plan is perhaps I can help you out."

"Well, it's like this," I began. "You see, I am a actress by profession, and making fair to middling good at it, which has kept me too busy to get a great deal of book education."

"I see," says the bird, taking real notice, and not merely professional notice now.

"And so long as I had no kid it didn't matter much," I went on. "As a matter of fact, I never give it a thought. But now I realize I got to jazz up my mind on the kid's account—get some general culture and everything—stuff down a little information, and so forth, so's he won't

Digitized by Google

think I'm a dead one. And so far I ain't had much luck. I found a book by a fellow named Lamb in a cupboard ma bought secondhand for the kitchen. Also two by Thoreau and some poetry by a kind of a nut named Browning. But either they are dead from the neck up, or I am, because I can't find any pleasure in them."

"Well, I'm not altogether surprised at your not caring for them," says the bookkeeper. "You find those old fellows dull because they are dull."

"Then maybe I'm not such a simp as I thought. Can you give me the works of some live wires—and if possible in pink bindings so's they'll go good in my boudoir after I'm through with them?"

"Well, I'm not so sure about the bindings," says the print hound, smiling gently in such a way he let me know I'd made a break there. "But I certainly can give you some fine, live modern reading. Why go back to the Victorians?" he goes on. "Read the things of to-day—vigorous real things. By Jove, that's what a real man or woman wants! No wonder you got discouraged. Now, will you really let me help? I'll be only too happy to make out a list if you will let me."

"Go to it!" I says enthusiastically. "Only break me in kind of easy. I'm in your hands."

"Good!" says the Spelling Book Binder. "This is a great privilege—Miss La Tour, is it not?"

Whatter you know about that! Of course, I melted entirely then, just like any other well-known personality who of course cares nothing for fame. And so I modestly admitted that it was really me, and then the big selection commenced.

"Now, what you want is some Russian stuff," he began.

"Hold on!" I says. "No Russian stuff for mine!"

"Oh, but really," says he, "you must read Prince Mudgaard's Prunes! It's wonderful—simply wonderful!"

Digitized by Google

"All right, I'll read it," I says, "if it's the thing to do."

"And then we'll have Gogol's Dead Souls and a Dunsany play or two. You'll love Dunsany! For poetry, I think Amy Lowell will do for a beginning. And you simply must have a copy of Karl Westman's new book Arise America!"

"Sure, give me that!" I says. It listens the best of the lot to me!"

"It's a wonderful book—simply wonderful!" says the brainy young thing. "Mr. Westman comes in here often. I know him rather well."

Somehow that name of Westman sounded awfully familiar to me, but I couldn't just think why at the time. So I just says "Oh, yes, how interesting!" in a tone like I knew all about him. Also I looked hard at the book he had written—a neat and harmless-appearing cover was on it, all pale gray like a gift book. So naturally I didn't feel any impulse to open it.

"Personally I believe he's one of the most important writers in the country to-day," went on the Bookworm.

"Of course!" says I, my mind like a new vacuum cleaner but not willing to admit it.

"And by Jove, here he comes now!" exclaimed my guide, philosopher and salesman brightly. "What luck! He runs in nearly every day to see how his book is going. Will you let me bring him over?"

And then, without giving me a chance to vote, off jumps that culture fiend toward a man who had just come languidly in, and left me standing sort of paralyzed and wishing I was on location or at home or any place where they have to telephone up before they can get in. Not that a well-known person like myself is unaccustomed to meeting people, but an author is a different matter, and not exactly human, and by the way I felt while the salesman was bringing him over I begin to understand why

Digitized by Google

authors are called Lions. It's the way you feel when you meet them, and when a kid with the circus I, of course, saw a lot of real ones, only they was always in a cage, and Madame Leonine was no faker either.

Well, anyways, they was fast approaching and I had no way out, and when we were introduced I was glad I had remained at the hitching post.

"Miss La Tour," says Westman, "I can't tell you how delighted I am at this opportunity! I've wanted to know you for a long time. Do you know, you are one of the few stars I ever go to see?"

"Pleased to meet you," I says. "And I may add you are one of the few authors who's books I buy." And I waved it at him, being fortunately caught with the goods.

"You've actually read my stuff then?" says the handsome author.

"Yes, all of them, and I think they are simply wonderful!" I says, and God forgive me for the lie—I don't suppose anybody ever told one like it before. But I got away with it all right, as he didn't ask me any questions like I was afraid he would, but only beamed and swallowed not only what I said but what I implied.

"Miss La Tour," says Mr. Westman, shaking his curly locks, "I have discovered the incredible—a motion-picture actress who belongs to the Intelligensia."

"Oh, but I don't!" I says. "I only belong to the Red Cross and the White Kittens Theatrical Ladies' Association."

Mr. Westman seemed to think this was funny, and he didn't hesitate to say so.

"A wit as well!" said he. "Really, my dear young lady, I'm not going to lose sight of you! I've got some scenarios that I think you'd be perfect in, and I want you to see them. How about a little dinner to-night?"

"Well," I says, a good deal impressed by a real, genuine

Digitized by Google

author wanting to write especially for me, "I don't know is my husband free. But we might phone to the studio and find out is he going to get through or will he have to work to-night, and if he can accept—why, we would be charmed, I'm sure."

Well, Mr. Westman was game, even though I am happy to say he looked disappointed about the husband, and long may men look at me so, if you get me! And I went and phoned to Jim, and he said who the devil was Westman, but all right if I wanted to; and I wanted to all right, because I intended to take a script off this great author if it was any good; or maybe the picture rights to America Arise, which was a pretty good title if you put Miss before it. Only, of course, I did not tell Mr. Westman right off the reel, because that would of been bad business, but expected to spring it on Al and make it in the East when there was room.

"That will be delightful," says Mr. Westman when I told him what Jim had said, omitting the part which was fit only for wifely ears. "How splendid! Now I'll tell you what—we'll eat at the Mocking Turtle, a little place I know of down in Greenwich Village. It'll be a change for you, Miss La Tour, and we are almost certain to meet some interesting people. Shall we say at seven?"

So I said seven, and Mr. Westman went away to a meeting, very full of business, but so plainly tickled that I commenced to wonder wasn't I the lion instead of him. It give me a real thrill to feel myself associated with the highbrow world like that, and naturally I wanted to be primed for it right.

"Look here, captain!" I says to the sales gentleman when Mr. Westman had gone. "Look here—tell me a little something about the Great Man, will you? So I can talk intelligently, you know. I noticed his hands looked awful rough for a writer."

Digitized by Google

"Well, no wonder!" says the book herder with a deep sigh of near-sympathy. "They put him on the rock pile at the penitentiary, you know."

"What?" I says, thinking there must be some mistake. But there wasn't. The bird only gives another sigh and shook his head—as much in pride as in pity.

"He's only been out two months," he informs me.

Digitized by Google

II

A GOOD time to tell a husband anything that can be argued about is while he is fighting his way into a dress shirt, or maybe with his mouth full of tooth paste, which gives him time to think twice before coming back at you. By a long wifely experience I have learned this, and so that evening when I got home I waited until Jim was at the shirt stage before breaking the whole truth to him. He had got back from the studio late, and commenced flinging off his coat and hollering for his dress suit almost before he was properly inside the flat, and you would of thought it was my fault he was late, and he always pulls the first holler, and if he keeps it up long and loud enough he gets away with it; and I sometimes think maybe I am to blame because he missed the ferry or the car broke down or whatever was the cause of the delay.

And any other wife will confess to the fact that husbands have an awful mysterious way of putting you in the wrong for something they have done their own selves, and the easiest way to restore peace is to let them get away with it.

Well, anyways, this evening I was home and waiting in a snappy black taffeta resterant frock and Maison Rosabelle had charged me twenty dollars extra for calling it a frock instead of a dress. Well, anyways, I was home waiting in it and a sort of calm excitement over being about to burst into highbrow society, and also a new hat with a tulle crown and a fur brim to keep my brains warm in case the company was cold to me, when in bursts Jim, his latchkey going wild and not working, the way they always act when you are in a hurry.

Digitized by Google

"Well, kid, I hope you are all ready," he says before I could say it to him, "because we are late now," he says. "Got my things out?"

"They are," I says, "on the bed, and I been dressed for an hour."

"Oh, you would, of course! Come on in while I jump into the soup-and-fish and tell me where is this we are going that you was so excited about it on the phone."

So I come in, and while Jim dug among his collars and swore at his studs and snortled into the washbowl and peered at me over the top of the towel he was drying his face on, and generally going through the charming, dainty routine of husbandly dressing, why, I managed to slip in a few pills of information here and there, and then bet with myself as to whether he was listening or not.

"Who's'is feller Westman?" says Jim, feeling did he need a shave or not and eventually persuading himself in the mirror that he didn't. "Some big bug?"

"He's a great writer," I says impressively—"a real one with books on the market and a thin goatee and mustache," I says. "And he wants to write a picture for me. He's a real highbrow, Jim," I says. "I could tell it on him at a glance. And we're going to have dinner in Greenwich Village with him and a lot of genuine artists and writers—no fake stuff, but the real inside circle."

"Know anything else about him?" says Jim.

"Well, he belongs to a club called the Intelligensia," I says.

"Never heard of it," says Jim through his undershirt. "Now, if it was the Pineapple Social Outing or the Actor's Equity I might find out something about him," he went on, emerging through the neckband.

"You don't need to," I says, very indignant. "He's a very famous person, and has opinions."

Digitized by Google

"What are they?" says Jim, diving into his open-faced shirt. It was then that I sprung the Big Fact.

"I don't know," I says. "But he's been to jail for them."

Jim made some queer snorts inside the bosom, but I went on quickly before he could get out.

"At any rate, it's the first chance we've had to meet any people with brains and culture, and we are not going to miss it," I says. "Jail or no jail, we are going to keep that date."

And then Jim appeared, red in the face and gasping for breath.

"Jail?" he says. "For the love of Lulu! Say, I'm not going to eat with any boarder from Sing Sing!"

"Now, James Smith," I says, "you listen to me, and keep your shirt on!" not meaning that he was actually taking it off again, because the dress ones are too difficult for hasty action, but you get me and so did he. "Now, James Smith, you listen to me and tuck away a little information. I got my reasons for going downtown to-night, and one of them is that I want to be informed. My mind enjoys working, and it don't get much exercise at home. I got a strong hunch it'll be an interesting party, and after all we don't know what it was Westman was jugged for. I got a suspicion the same as you have it was some radical opinions, but leave me tell you, Jim, radical opinions can't be ignored entirely nowadays. We are living in a world which is very much jazzed up in its mind, what with the income tax and the high cost of food and the terrible confessions of profiteering which we read in the advertising pages of the newspapers every day. Only a fool will pretend there is nothing the matter with the world and that things is the same as they used to be. That ostrich stuff won't get you anything except maybe a wallop on the

Digitized by Google

part which ain't stuck in the sand. So, I say, let's go down and listen. Maybe we will learn something."

"Well," says Jim, and I'll say he was pretty patient to hold out that long, "if you say so, Baby, we'll go. Only if I have to start something don't say I didn't warn you."

"You'll start nothing!" I says firmly. "These are brainy birds, and we are going to enjoy a little exchange of ideas. And now leave that tie alone—it's all right. And come on, we're late."

Well, all the way down from Riverside to the Mocking Turtle, which was on West Fourth Street, I didn't say anything about the offer Goldringer had made me or how I had at least temporarily refused it, but sat in a daze, being kind of scared about who would I meet and what would I say to them, but real pleased to have the new experience and wondering would I get by without giving away how little culture I had. Because, of course, I realized that money is not everything in life and that education is a awful precious thing, and that one who has it can make one which has it not feel cheap, no matter how much money you have and they haven't. Do you get me? And believe me, on that ride downtown I would of exchanged my five-carrot diamond ring for a college education in a minute if I could of! But never mind, I thought, I am willing to learn, and a open mind is above rubies or five-carrot diamonds either, as the poet says, and I have got one.

And so while Jim kept up a line of talk about the studio and what a rotten director Art Wentz was and how the lights give out and no extra fuses in a great big studio like that and so forth and ect., and perfectly content with my wifely "Indeed, dear?" every now and then, I kept getting more troubly inside me the further downtown we went, and wondering could I remember the names of the books I had bought that afternoon so's to mention them

Digitized by Google

carelessly throughout the meal, and then at last we arrived at the Mocking Turtle.

Well, believe me that café reminded me of the Ritz—it was so different! It had once been a barber shop, but the barber had taken away all his sanitary fixtures when he left, and now there was an elegant cheesecloth drapery in the window and some paintings on the glass which I would of taken to be amateur if I hadn't known they were artistic. Rollo, our chauffeur, who is sort of a formal bird, looked worried when Jim told him ten o'clock would be the limit, and watched us into the artists' resort with a anxious eye. But though I hated to worry him, in we went, and there inside was Mr. Karl Westman, goatee and all, and he had dressed for dinner by the simple process of adding a new black ribband to his eyeglasses.

"Ah, Miss La Tour!" he says, coming forward eagerly, sort of surprised like he had been afraid we wouldn't show.

"This is my husband, Mr. James Smith," I says, introducing Jim.

And the two shook hands like I had said "both members of this club," but it went no farther, and then we sat down at a table without any wasteful laundry work on it and commenced to wait for the others, as Mr. Westman explained.

Inside, the Mocking Turtle was one of those restaurants where you have to talk in a whisper or not at all, unless you hire the whole place or don't care who hears you. Mr. Westman didn't care—he made that plain right away.

"I've brought you a copy of my paper, The Arm of Labor," he says, giving it to me with a something on the cover which I thought at first was meant to be cut out with the scissors and put together right to amuse the little ones, but which had "Dance of Spring" printed under it,

Digitized by Google

which I read just in time to avoid a break. "And here is a pamphlet I wrote on Lenine. I'm sure it will interest you."

"Thank you," I says.

"But the main thing," says Westman, "is the picture possibilities of Arise America. Have you thought about it at all since this afternoon?"

"Not beyond the title, which is great," I says. "Do you think it would be a good picture?"

"Magnificent!" says Westman. "It could be built up in such a way as to carry the real message to the people."

"That's swell!" I says.

And then before we could talk about it any further the distinguished company began to come in with a eager air, but whether to meet me or a square meal I don't care to say in writing. And such a lot of well-known names among them! At least, each time I got introduced I had the feeling that my not knowing the name was my own ignorance, and I felt a mere siphon beside them.

Among the real invited guests at our table was a lady named Rosa Gratz and her husband, Mr. Crabtree Bett. I thought at first she was professional on account of being Miss and a different name to her husband's, but it seems she was just a professional Miss, and that keeping her own name was all the profession she had in life. He was the man who had amalgamated the Sausage Stuffers' Union or something. Anyways, he was very important, and wrote plays between strikes; and none of the movie rights to them was sold, as he cared nothing for commercialism, or so he told me; but I was welcome to see them if I wanted to, because he understood I was Liberal. He himself was a philosophic Anarchist, and was free all day to-morrow if I cared to have him read those plays to me. And just as I was going down for the third time my life was saved by the arrival of Lu Wildhack, which was not a Chinaman,

Digitized by Google

but a girl who had robbed a tortoise of his eyeglasses, and she was evidently Mr. Westman's Sweetie and awful afraid somebody would fail to realize that they were not married, and was maybe a little disappointed in me because of I not being more shocked. But in ten years on Broadway, why, you see a lot of poor things in the same fix, and I long ago realized it was not always their fault, but a incompetent mother's and the hard time they have to get along is really punishment enough. And after her came Mr. Westman's brother, a quiet young chap who just sat and said nothing.

Well, our invited company consisted as listed above, information drawn from sources which we believe to be reliable, meaning our own eyes and ears. But the table which had once worked in a boarding house could hold a lot more than six, and did, because practically the entire intellectual lower world, meaning that part which is situated south of Fourteenth Street, come over to the table and sat there during the evening, and by the time we had got to what I took to be filet of sole leather I had eight disinterested parties who never went to the pictures because they was so vulgar and so hopelessly bad offer me really good scenarios. The altruistic spirit of that Cave of Culture was a beautiful thing, and I'll say those highbrows didn't care any more for breaking into the despised pictures than they did for their right arm. But anyways, I was learning a whole lot, though not exactly what I had expected to, and at any rate there had so far been nothing for Jim to kick about except the meal.

But after we had eat the trouble began. One of the symptoms of Bohemianism is to hang around the table after you are through eating, and this is what we did, talk being a inexpensive form of entertainment, and our host had plenty of it. And what is further, that was just what I had come for, and so I was perfectly agreeable—

Digitized by Google

up to a certain point. I felt all set for a heated intellectual discussion as I sat there amidst the smoke screen sent up by the cigarettes which everybody but me was smoking and watching the others enjoying some boot licker that one of the crowd had brought and refraining myself, not because of moral reasons but on account of thinking more of my Art than I do of my stomach, and it's the truth, they got more to do with each other than a person would suppose.

Well, anyways, I felt about fifty per cent more intellectual than ever before, although whether it was because of my dinner didn't set very well, or not, I can't be sure; and so I thought, now I will start what I came for, and so I says, "Mr. Westman, don't you think all this talk of the Soviet spreading over the world is more or less the bunk?" I says.

Westman opened his little eyes very wide at that.

"My dear lady," he says, "the International is not a theory any longer—it is a fact! Look at Russia! Look at Italy! England will be next and then France, and by that time America will be ready—if she has not already come in!"

He says this with such a sure kind of manner that I couldn't come back at him the way I wanted to—quick and snappy. I could only look at him stupidly while my mind searched around for what I wanted to say next.

"But why should anybody in America want to revolt?" I says, and everybody at the table stopped to listen. Westman give a bitter laugh.

"Why?" he asks. "You ask me why?"

"I do!" I says firmly. "I'm not such a fool as not to read the papers, and of course I see a lot of pieces where the country is full of strikes—coal strikes, garment strikes, even milk strikes—and lockouts, whatever they are. And yet we certainly got a rich and prosperous country where everybody seems to have plenty of money to spend. Why

Digitized by Google

would we want a revolution here? What is it you—because I suppose that's what you was in jail for—want to change?"

"Now look here, my dear young lady!" says Mr. Westman. "That is a big order for a single evening. But I can tell you a few things that you are going to see changed. You are going to see the people—the common people—come into power, first of all, and the power of the capitalists taken away from them."

"But most of the capitalists I know are awful common people," I says, and this got a laugh, although that was not what I had intended. "What I mean is that they mostly come from the lower East Side in the first place, and was maybe a newsboy or some such thing to begin, with poor but by no means necessarily honest parents. But their willingness to work and save and use their brains have got them where they are to-day."

"Social justice is based on fairness to the average man, and not on the exceptional, Miss La Tour," says Westman.

"But how are you going to stop the good ones?" I says. "They'll always get on top."

"It may be necessary to kill off all of those who refuse to put their services at the disposal of the proletariat," says Westman, his face getting sort of ugly and purple. "I am convinced that direct action is the only solution in many of the problems of social readjustment."

This got me sore and a little scared.

"But do you think you've got any real backing in this country for that sort of thing?" I says, real quiet on the surface, but nearing the boiling point inside.

"I've got practically the whole country," says Westman grimly. "There's an immense organization in existence which will show its hand at the proper time. It has given warnings before now, and when it declares itself the

Digitized by Google

entire country will arise from its misery and follow the new leaders to freedom."

There was a short pause after this, and I for the first time really noticed Westman's brother, Tom, who had been sitting in silence all evening. What caught me now was the anxious way he was watching Karl. The kid's eyes was half shut and two lines had come into his face—deep lines of worry—and he had turned a sort of ashy color like he was sick. He didn't say nothing at all, but I couldn't help wondering about it.

Then Rosa Gratz spoke up.

"Miss La Tour," says she, "you ought to be in a position to know something of the truth about the condition of the people—the vast downtrodden mass of the people in this country to-day—and to sympathize with them. You are of the people yourself."

"You said a mouthful!" I replied. "I was raised on Avenue A and in the dressing rooms of circuses and cheap theaters all my young life," I says. "And I hated it, and made up my mind to fight my way out of it," I says. "And by a lot of hard work I've done so," I says. "But nobody ever tried to keep me down," I says, "nor deprive me of a living or a fair show. I've always been well paid when I could deliver the goods," I says, "and so has everybody else who has done the same."

"But you had the goods, as you call it, to deliver, Miss La Tour," Miss Gratz goes on. "Suppose—pardon my being personal—but just suppose you hadn't been so pretty. Would you have been so successful?"

Well; that was a mean question, and pretty near a knockout, because a face which is easy to look at on the screen is certainly the one which gets there, only that ain't all there is to it. But it's awful hard to make one who is not familiar with a studio understand that pictures is real work

Digitized by Google

and that the money in it has to be earned the same as any other money.

"About the East Side you are right," I says. "There are plenty of horrors in it—almost as bad as what I've read about what is going on in Petrograd since the revolution took place."

"You mean what you've read in the capitalist press about Petrograd," Mr. Crabtree chimed in. "You don't know the truth—and even if it isn't perfect, the result in Russia has proved sufficiently interesting to spread through the workingmen's organizations all over the world—by no means excepting America."

"But if the people here are really as discontented as you say," I says, "why don't they take more interest in politics? They got a vote, you know. I personally myself think they got a pretty good machine with which to express theirself right now."

Suddenly Karl Westman got excited. He got on his feet and hit the table a wallop. His brother, with his face whiter than ever, half got up, too, but sank back again, still silent.

"Express themselves—express themselves!" Karl shouted. "God help them—much good their expressed wishes do them! Look at the miners, at the longshoremen—look at all the industrial slaves of this country—and then ask me why they don't express themselves! Politics are a rotten, filthy mess—democracy a rank failure! We are through with them, I tell you! We want action—direct action—war if you like—war with the rich, with the smug bourgeoisie with their fat little savings and their stupid content, and we'll put an end to their dull tyranny if we have to blow them to hell to do it!"

"Karl!" says young Westman suddenly, and his voice was like a whiplash. "Sit down and shut up!"

And abruptly Mr. Westman sat down. Everybody was

Digitized by Google

talking at once, then, Miss Gratz about the West Virginia miners, Mr. Crabtree shouting something about the expressmen's strike, and a perfectly strange female who had got in with our bunch someways or another had Jim collared and he couldn't strike her, no matter what she was saying, but looked as if he wished she was a man. I turned to young Westman, who had moved over into the seat next to me, while his brother whispered to the Wildhack lady.

"Say, brother," I says to him, more to find out could he talk than anything—"say, bo," I says, "are you with this bunch on this Great American Revolution thing?"

"I don't know," he says slowly. "Sometimes when I see the poverty of the slums and then suddenly the wealth on the Avenue I'm with the revolution heart and soul. When I see the misuse of power by the officials of the great cities, the diversion of the public funds, the neglect of the public's interests, yes, I am for it! When I hear my brother Karl there talk, with his conviction, his fire, and realize that he has given his whole life to this work —even gone to prison for the sake of his convictions— then I believe in the revolution. And his following is a powerful thing."

"Just what is his following?" I says.

"Any number of union leaders," said Tom Westman. "Karl can swing their men any way he wants to, and they know it."

"How can he get the time," I says, "from his work?"

"It is his work!" says Tom in some surprise. "The Internationalists support him, you know."

"I didn't know," I says shortly. "Do you believe in this direct action stuff, too?"

Young Westman give a crooked little smile at that.

"I saw enough of the results of direct action in the Red Cross service for two years," he says, "to think much of unnecessary killing. But it's true I've come back to find

Digitized by Google

a lot of things I don't like—cheap skates that made a pile while the boys was fighting, and all that. Yes, sometimes I think a revolution—a clean sweep—is the only way."

"I don't!" I says hotly. "There must be some other answer. There's a lot about our Government I don't like myself, especially the income tax, and I don't care for this Blue Sunday idea. Sunday is the only day for we actresses to get a little pleasure. But I'm not going to throw any bombs about it."

Young Westman give a jump at that.

"Don't!" he says, laughing a little in not quite a healthy way. "I don't like that sort of talk either. But if the country wants a revolution it will have it, you can depend on that!"

"If this whole United States of America is as sick as you people make out," I says, "I ought to know the facts and help call in the doctor. I've heard a lot of wise cracks and long words here to-night, and it's got me worried. You people down here can write and talk a lot better than most of us, and educated people ought to know what they are talking about."

Karl Westman heard this and turned around to me again.

"We do know what we are talking about, Miss La Tour," he says awful solemn and impressive. "Soon—very soon you will see action. Remember what I say, when you read of it! The poverty and oppression in this country are no idle theories but a grim reality, and before long you will see a concrete demonstration of our impatience with it."

Well, these words give me an awful sickly feeling, but before they had time to sink in we got a concrete example of direct action right then and there in the Mocking Turtle Café, and Jim did the directing, but his fist did the action. He had been put at the far end of the long table,

Digitized by Google

but I had for some time realized that all the argument had not been cooped up at my end, and Jim's voice had got into it stronger and stronger, and now he landed with his right on Mr. Crabtree's jaw, but the jaw not being made for anything but talk and to hold up a beard, he went backwards over the table.

Well, I don't know just how to tell what happened then, but for a few minutes it was a riot, only quite a little of the company left in a hurry without saying good night or anything, and finally when Jim was pulled off what was left of Mr. Crabtree, why, we said good night, or at least I remembered to, and that we would like to pay for the chairs that was broke, and any china, and then we somehow got out to the limousine and into it, and I turned on my husband and give him what Mr. Crabtree had been unable to—a good licking—only I, being a lady, did it with words.

"The idea!" I says. "Such a low-life performance! Can't a person have a little intellectual conversation on the questions of the day without pulling any rough stuff? Suppose we don't agree with them. We ain't in their revolution yet—time enough to lick the pants off 'em when they try to start it," I says.

"Revolution?" says Jim. "I didn't hear anything about any revolution! I hit him because he says motion-picture actors was cooties."

Digitized by Google

III

WHAT?" says I. "He says actors was cooties?" "Well, he says they belonged to the parasitic class," says Jim, "and that highbrow language didn't get by me—and me having signed a contract this very day to go to the coast and make a serial with more he-man work in it than he ever did in his whole entire life!"

Wouldn't that jolt you? I'll say so! Well, I just sat there with the wind taken out of me, and for a moment I was wordless, though a wife. But not thoughtless, I'll tell the world! Because while I sat there like a boob a real idea was coming to me—a big idea that gave me a wide-open feeling like clean air was blowing through my brains and made my heart leap and handed me the first real emotional excitement I had had since the baby come. All of a sudden them books I had bought and those highbrows I'd been out with seemed stuffy and smelly and kind of unreal. Maybe they had told the truth, but any one person can only tell a little part of the truth because the truth has many sides to it; and I felt in my heart that I knew something that those highbrows didn't, and that I would and could tell my side. Tell it to the people! All the people—all the way across the country! If those darn Reds had a right to go out and tell the world one thing, I had as good a right to tell them different, and I would do it! I would tell my side to my suffering, downtrodden country; tell 'em that all they needed to do to be prosperous and happy was to work—I would say that to them—I, the living example of that it can be done!

Did the big thought lift me up like religion? I'll say

Digitized by Google

so! I felt pure and washed, sort of, and it certainly was a pleasant feeling. But I didn't try to explain it to Jim. There is no use trying to explain your emotions to your husband. I found that out long ago. So all I says out loud was, "Jim," I says, "forget them literary nitwits. I got a wonderful plan. Goldringer wants me to go out to the coast too. I was going to talk to you about it to-night. What do you say if we take the old bus and drive the whole way?"

Jim turned to me with a look like I ain't seen on his face since I said "Yes."

"Kid," said he just too sweetly for words—"kid, you got brains all over your body!"

The next morning I woke up early, about ten o'clock, with the feeling that something had happened and something else was going to, only I didn't know what, but only a sort of flutter in my middle. Then all at once I remembered I was going to drive to California!

And when Musette, my personal maid, come in with a light breakfast of only coffee and serial and eggs Benedictine, which means married eggs—well, anyway, only that and a little French toast and jam—why, I could hardly made a dent in it because of the excitement I was in over my plan.

There was also some letters on the tray, and the morning papers, and when I had found that Jim was already gone out on a early location on Brooklyn Bridge and ma and the nurse and baby was also on location somewheres in the marketing district, I though, well, here's my chance for a little peace and privacy and I can think out a few things without some loving member of my family nagging me to know what am I thinking about, or where will they send the laundry this week, or please let me have a dollar forty-five for the boy from the drug store or some such intrusion on a married artist's privacy.

Digitized by Google

Well, anyways, when I had pecked at my food until it was all gone and meanwhile thought over last night and the sort of half-real, half Welsh-rarebit-dream people we had been with, which it's the truth; they kind of seemed to belong to a race of their own, not pure anything—do you get what I mean?—but about one-third white, one-third Red and one-third tortoise-shell, and yet were the ones in this country who were doing all the talking and getting no end of publicity for it—well, the more I thought of them the madder I got, and the more I was determined I would go and do a little shouting on my own. Here these parrots kept up their yell of Red, Red, Red, and nobody answered them back! But I would! Just how I didn't know as yet, but I would tell the hicks throughout this fairly broad land something about Americanism.

And finally I had myself so worked up I was mentally running around in circles. So I says to myself, "Here, Mary Gilligan Smith La Tour, keep your boudoir cap on! Maybe the members of this Intelligentzia Club are all right. Maybe they got the right dope about the Great American Revolution being a sure thing. But if they are there is no use you going crazy too! Get your bean clear and then get a little action!"

"All right!" I answered myself. "Then I'll just calm down, read my mail and the papers and then get busy with my preparations."

So I got out of bed and into a negligee and took my literature into my boudoir, which I had recently done over in period furniture but do not like it much. I don't know why they call it period furniture unless because somebody put a stop to it a long time ago which makes it hard to get and expensive. Well, anyway, I've got some of it now because all cultured people do, and I settled myself in a Tudor armchair which was very valuable—it was the original model for the Electric chair—but fortunately

Digitized by Google

had some La Tour lingerie cushions in it, and then I commenced my reading.

There was nothing in the mails to take my mind off the Revolution, however—only a bill from Maison Rosabelle for a couple of negligées but with nothing negligée about the price, the notice of my income-tax installment and a form letter asking me to contribute to the defense fund of a couple of Boston wops who it seemed hadn't done anything in the world but kill a special officer and a paymaster and get away with eighteen thousand dollars in an automobile. And now, the letter went on to say, the corrupt police had the nerve to capture these poor friends of the common people and had them in the cooler, and as nobody had seen them do the killing would I please send a few berries at once to prevent this outrage upon the personal liberty of our citizens, because they were undoubtedly being railroaded by the cruel capitalists who couldn't see the justice in this cute little performance.

Well, of course, I don't see how this got by the using-the-mails-to-obtain-money-under-at-least-doubtful-pre t e n s e s law. But it did back up what Westman had said about the organization of radicals. It was a printed letter, and a printed folder went with it—a expensive sort of advertising, and I wish Al Goldringer would do as much in his motion-picture business. Only a rich organization could put stuff like that out. And it was not the first letter of the kind I had received, as I then also realized. I tore it up in little pieces and put a period to that in the period wastebasket and turned to the newspapers.

Now you can't hardly call the regular New York newspapers in good standing radical. As a matter of fact, Mr. Westman had called them something which no lady would repeat, but which meant that they were distinctly on the other side from him. And yet out of eight headlines across the front page here is what I read:

Digitized by Google

1. Coal Strikers Refuse to Arbitrate.
2. Dockmen Declare War to Finish.
3. Thirty-four Robberies, Three Murders, Ten Hold-ups, Two Shootings City Record Last Week.
4. Riots in Belfast, Ten Killed.
5. Mrs. MacSwiney Greeted With Cheers.

And if that isn't giving all the news space to the Reds, what is? I went wild when I read them, and commenced searching through the inside pages for something pleasant, and way down under the theatrical ads I found a little piece one-tenth of a column long which says, "Biggest Crops Since 1905 Promised for this Year."

Can you beat that? I lay back as far as I could in the torture chair, fairly sick with the condition of my country. This was serious. If all that stuff was so much more important than the good news, we as a nation was in a bad way, that was clear to any fool. I could read the evidence, plain as the print it was in, but somehow the inside of me—my heart if not my mind—says to me there was a catch some place. It couldn't be as bad as it seemed.

Yet day after day the papers was printing that sort of stuff.

If it was true every decent American ought to act and act quick before it was too late. But it couldn't be too late. I wouldn't leave it be. A wave of excitement swept over me, but I didn't let it go at that. There's no sense in having a strong feeling unless you put it to work. Emotion is not a end in itself, and the way to get action out of an emotion is to pledge yourself so's you can't back out when you cool down. So I threw away my conservative newspaper and grabbed hold of the telephone. And after only the delay a person would expect I had Al on the wire.

"Hello, Al!" I says.

Digitized by Google

"That you Mary?" says Al. "How's the world treating you?"

"It ain't treating me," I says. "I have to buy my own," I says. "Which at the present prices, Al, means I'm going to work," I says.

"That picture is going to be made on the coast," says Al.

"I admit it," I says. "But I'm going to drive out in the Colby-Droit."

"What?" says Al. "Driving? Can't you see enough from a train that I got to pay expenses on a car? Say, if I was to offer you the Singer Building you would want me to throw in the Metropolitan Tower!"

"Never mind expenses!" I says. "I'll be reasonable on that."

"But it will take such a time!" says Al. "I got a wire from Rosin this morning saying they will have space in three weeks for a big feature."

"Tell him one month from next Tuesday," I says, "and shoot the contract around for me to make my mark on."

"Well, have it your own way," says Al as if he was giving me something new. "Anyways, that auto trip will be good publicity."

"Not on your life!" I says. "I'm going on business of my own as Mrs. James Smith," I says, "and I don't want the country all jazzed up to meet me. I want to catch it as it really is, with its kimono on and its hair in curlers."

Well, right away we had a fight on that, but I won, because the telephone operator give me the last word, and naturally I didn't try to ring him back.

Instead I got up and dressed, because I had left myself under a week to get ready, and realized that it's the woman has always to get things done before any trip or they are not, and that Jim would be busy up to the last

Digitized by Google

minute, but was fortunately only working on some retakes now, his serial having finished the week before.

Well, the first thing I done was break the news to ma that she would have to take care of the baby and bring him and the nurse on by train, because even then I realized a open car and a trip like that wouldn't do him any good, with no milk on the desert and all. And instead of raising a kick, a fearful look of cunning come into ma's face exactly like the heavy in a melo when he sees that at last he can have his will, and I could fairly see her feeding that young one sausage to keep him quiet, and picking him up when he yelled and rocking him to sleep and all those good old-fashioned methods, which my generation grew up in spite of. But then on the other hand I knew Miss Barker, the nurse, wouldn't leave her do it, because she always prevented me, and I had first claim on him.

Of course, I hated to leave my baby, and it was the only real drawback to the trip. But it was like the girls making me take my wedding ring off right after I was married. They said it was better, because in case I ever had to later I wouldn't feel so bad about doing it. And a professional woman who is a mother has to do the same with her child; and I might have to go to Cuba on a location or Mexico or anywheres, so why not get the agony over at the start? And aside from that the prospect of having no family but Jim for a while was a kind of a relief. A child and your mother is something no woman would be without, but to be without them for a week or two is sometimes just as well, and after all I was going primarily for my country's sake, and I was sort of sorry I had only one family to give to it. There is a lot of difference between having the house quiet and making a lot of noise yourself, if you get me.

Well, anyways, I left ma gloating over her plans, and taking the bunch of books I had bought only the day

Digitized by Google

before, but which seemed like years ago, I went back to the store where I had bought them as a good beginning. The same bright baby that I had bought them of was there, and he seemed real surprised to see me.

"Good morning," he says. "My, but you are a fast reader! What would you like to-day?"

"I'd like to exchange this junk for a copy of Romeo and Juliet, a pocket dictionary and a English grammar," I says. "I appreciate your helpful suggestions, but I guess I'd better get educated in my own way."

"By Jove, I don't know but you are right!" says Student Willie. "How about Westman and Arise America? Are you going to make the picture?"

"I am!" I says. "But not out of his book. Thank God he couldn't copyright that title!"

Well, the bird laughed at that, and exchanged the books like I wanted him to, and as it had run to quite some money the day before, I got a copy of the play that give me real pleasure to handle—something I never expected to get from a book.

"By the way," says the book hustler as he give me my new package—"by the way, I heard a very curious thing about Westman this morning. It seems he's disappeared. He had a definite engagement late last night with the chap that told me—Crabtree—who was in this morning with a black eye. Seems he went to keep the date, and Westman's room had been stripped clean. Did you dine with him?"

"Yes, we did," I says. "I bet the bulls are after him. We left early, thank heavens!"

"Well, it's an odd story," says the young fellow. "But perhaps there's nothing in it."

"Probably not," I says, paying really very little attention, because I was interested in my own plans. "Can you tell me where to get a good automobile road map?"

Digitized by Google

"Why, at the A. A. A., I guess," says he. "Going far?"

"Just to California," I says. And then I thanked him and walked out, little dreaming that I had passed up a piece of information that was of the greatest importance.

Digitized by Google

IV

THE only thing I thought of as I walked out onto the Avenue was that I was going to take a tour which practically nobody had ever done, and that it must show on me. I had an idea that everybody who looked at me must know where I was going and what perils and adventures I was about to face. I felt like a mixture of Sir Guy the Crusader and Christopher Columbus, and somehow, while I didn't really expect perfect strangers to point at me and say "There is a woman who is motoring to California shortly," I certainly did feel apart from the common herd which hadn't been any further than from the Battery to Harlem. I felt important and expected to be treated accordingly, and so I went into the A. A. A. all prepared to hand them a big surprise. I guess I must of forgot I was in New York. Naturally I went first to the plush offices on the Avenue, and they was nearly as handsome as Goldringer's downtown place, and almost as full of eager seekers, only of course they were not actors but autoists.

Well, after I had sat there for maybe twenty minutes of my valuable time, nursing Shakspere and the dictionary while six people ahead of me was told no, the road from New York to Philadelphia hadn't been mended yet, and you better take a train, a nice but exhausted young fellow lifted his eyebrows at me and I sprung my bomb—only the moment after I done so I saw it was a dud.

"I'm driving to California next week," I says impressively, "and I think I better get some information from you about roads and hotels."

Digitized by Google

"Which way are you going?" says the young man like water off a duck's back.

"Is there more than one way?" I says, flat as a cake on a cold griddle. "I want the best paved way."

The young man give a mysterious smile at that, which I didn't then understand. And a good thing we don't always understand what is ahead of us or we'd never go any place—ain't it the truth?

"At this time of year I would go by the southern route," he says. "Take the Santa Fé trail. There might be some snow on the Lincoln Highway by the time you'll strike the high places, and you'd be playing safe by going the southern way. If we can help you in any way, be sure to let us know."

"Is it much of a trip?" I says casually. "Dangerous, and all?"

"Not a bit, not a bit! Hundreds of people making it all the time!" says he. "Gas stations every seventy-five miles—nothing to it!"

"Thank you," I says, unconvinced. "Then there's nothing special I ought to know. Will we have to camp?"

"Not unless you want to," he says.

"I don't," I says hastily. "I'm in the theatrical line, and hotels have nothing to teach me in the way of horrors."

"Well then, there's really nothing especial to tell you," says the feller. "You'll need a tow rope. Better take along an ax and a desert water bag, of course; and you will probably have to adjust the carburetor in high altitudes; and take a collapsible bucket to fill the radiator—fill every chance you get, whether you need it or not."

"Hadn't I better take some pemmican and a couple of guns?" I says, kidding him back. But he never smiled.

"Might be a good idea," he says seriously. And then he turned to a man who was tugging at his elbow impatiently. "Yes, sir," he says to the man, "splendid

Digitized by Google

road all the way to Canada, but it's dry now, you know."

Well I got up and got out at that and went on uptown, wondering all the way just how much the fellow was kidding. I don't mean about dry Canada; I mean about what I ought to take. Of course I expected to take along a few conveniences, but not to have to break the wilderness. However, the biggest shock was to have my news taken so calmly.

The young lady at the stationers where I went to buy a map didn't die of excitement at my trip either. She and a blonde was deep in their own affairs when I come in, my self-importance somewhat restored by then, and she was saying something about "and I says she knew all along he was married, and all the sympathy I got for her could be parked in a eye dropper," and the other one says, "Well, you ought never to trust a man till you get it on paper," and then I come in.

"I'm going to California," I says, "and I'd like a road map," I says.

But the first girl, far from realizing the strangeness of my remark, went on talking, but reached languidly over with her right hand without even looking and drew one from a pile—"So, I says, 'Are you sure he is married and it ain't just an alibi?' I says. Two dollars, please"—only this was to me.

Well, I gave her the two and took the map, and went out wondering when she had got back from her seventh transcontinental trip.

And, believe me, this was some map! During lunch, which I had by myself, I gave it the double O; and, as the poet says, a world of romance commenced to spread before me, and at the same time a slight tendency to coldness of the feet; but I put that right out of my head in favor of the excitement and adventure I saw there before me in red and blue lines. I'll tell the world this was the first map

Digitized by Google

I ever took any real interest in or cared where was the boundary line of anything, or how many miles there was in it, or any of those things which going to school had given me a natural hatred of. But, believe me, a map of some place you are going to is something different yet again from a map you got to study in school for no apparent reason.

As I commenced reading the names on it I got more and more excited. There was St. Louis, Kansas City, Dayton, where the aëroplanes come from, the Mississippi River, where the coon songs come from, and the Rocky Mountains! Why, we would have to go over 'em! And the Grand Canyon! They began to be places instead of names. When I showed the map to Jim that night we rolled these names about in our mouth like gum or something and chewed on them. But Jim didn't appreciate the map the way he ought to of. That was because I had bought it.

"Are you sure this is the right one?" he says, turning it over and examining it to try and find something wrong.

"It's official," I says.

"Well, it's not so bad," he had to admit at last. "But I think we ought to take the Lincoln Highway, at that. It's the best known."

"And miss the Canyon?" I says indignantly. "Not much! And, anyways, it's full of snow, or will be."

"In this heat?" says Jim. "Nonsense!"

Then the bell rung and we went at it for three rounds, which ended by compromising on the Santa Fé, Jim having been out by train that way, and I suppose giving in because he would be able to tell me what was coming next before we got to it, and no husband could be expected to resist that chance. But the way he handled that map drove me nearly wild. Before the end of the session you would of thought he had invented it and I had never seen it before.

"We'll go from New York to Pittsburgh," he says.

Digitized by Google

"And then do we make Chicago? Let's see—no, too far north. That's the Lincoln. Columbus, Ohio, would be better."

"Let's go by Philly and Baltimore," I says. "I played Pittsburgh once, and I want to see some place I ain't been."

"Well, Baltimore, then. We may as well go through as many states as possible," he agreed.

Then he commenced recognizing the names of some of the stations he had stopped at; and, like a man, that was where he wanted to go—some place he had been! But as it was all new to me, I should worry!

"There's a wonderful hotel at Albuquerque—right on the desert—the best thing in the town," he says. "And where was it I seen the Indians—was it Flagstaff? And wait until you see the jack rabbits in Kansas, and the grades we have to take in—in—I think it was Illinois."

Of course I couldn't check him up then. I believed every word he said the way you have to if you ain't been a place yourself. But I got a good memory, and Jim ought to of known better than to tempt it.

Well, by about nine-thirty we had a route to Los Angeles all doped out, via Kansas City, Las Vegas and San Bernardino. And when this was all settled we discovered the Yellowstone way up north, and started in all over again on a different line.

"We don't want to miss that!" says Jim, and I agreed with him.

So by ten-fifteen we had the northern route all arranged for—and then we remembered the snow, which was hard to keep in mind at seventy with the windows open.

"I don't know but that the old Spanish trail would be better than either of them," says Jim. "Lookit, kid, San Antonio is on it, and El Paso. We could slip into Mexhic-co and find out what a highball looks like, eh? Of course it's

Digitized by Google

a little longer, but what's a few hundred miles out of three thousand?"

"We'd have to take the boat to Jacksonville to do it," I says. "But that would be sort of good fun."

Well, at that we was off again, and by eleven o'clock we had seen New Orleans, the Rio Grande and was ordering a second round at Tia Juana.

"How long will it take?" I says, meaning the trip, not the drinks. "About two weeks?"

"I know a feller with Riolock Motor Company done it in five days," says Jim. "Only we don't want to hurry that much."

"We'll say a month or three weeks," I says. "I don't want any of this keeping on a schedule, Jim, and I won't do it. If you're going to be a timekeper on this trip I won't make it, that's all. I want to stop off when I see some place I like, and not be hauled away from Pike's Peak or something just because you have calculated we'd be in the next town four hours from then."

"Well, if you don't want to make a time record we'd better not go that extreme southern way," says Jim. "After all, I'm not so sure but that we'll see the most on the Santa Fé, and I'm at least sure it's interesting."

And so, having shown our independence of the A. A. A. advice by flirting with our own ignorance, we come back to the Santa Fé by twelve midnight, and having by now made a total of over nine thousand miles, with a few side trips thrown in, we was pretty well exhausted and ready for bed.

"I hope the old bus will make it," says Jim, standing up and yawning. "I wonder if we really had ought to try it?"

"James Smith, we are going to make that trip if we have to buy a new car to-morrow to do it!" I says hotly.

Digitized by Google

"We got this far, and now nothing would make me back out of it."

But for the next few days, which was one wild rush to get ready, I had several times when I would of backed out—almost. The first time was when I met Maison Rosabelle. She was, as usual, dressed in a ad of her shop, giving the appearance of a little child of forty-five or so, with a short dress but really not sufficient justification for it. I met her in the Paris Intime, where I was getting a few handkerchiefs for the trip in case I ran short and couldn't buy any. I always use a particular kind of handkerchiefs, you know, and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to buy them West.

Well, anyways, there was Maison getting a few practical Georgette winter weights, and of course I mentioned casually that we was going to the coast. But did she drop dead? She did not!

"Is that so, dearie?" she says. "You will find it real interesting, only the roads is awful. We went out last year, you know."

"Oh," says I kind of flat, "is that so?"

"Yes, indeed," she says. "And let me tell you, whatever you do, be sure and take a big piece of canvas to put under the front wheels in case you get stuck in the sand and their ain't any brush around to cut. And another thing, if you come to a big washout, go down real slow, and then step on her quick the very minute you reach the bottom. Otherwise you'll run the car's nose into the sand and be stuck. Never try to rush a washout going down." Then she turned to the saleslady. "Any wash-satin petticoats?" she says.

Maison! Can you beat it? I was so stunned you could of knocked me down with a drop of a hat!

"Did you really drive?" I says humbly enough to suit even a woman friend.

Digitized by Google

"I sure did!" says Maison. "I and Rollo done it in the flivver. It's a bird of a trip, dearie, and be sure to take four pair of chains with you—you'll need 'em in Illinois—and be sure to put 'em on if it even starts to rain. Them roads are worse when it rains a little than when it rains real bad."

"How about clothes?" I says, gasping and looking at this new Maison. But look as I might, she seemed just the same as ever—make-up, extreme clothes and all. I could hardly believe her, and yet she was as casual as if speaking of seeing a new fillum or something.

"Oh, clothes!" says our leading Snappy Ladies' Gowns and Modes. "Oh, clothes—get some old khaki thing!"

Well, I walked out on her at that! Of course if she chose to drive to the coast in a flivver and dress like a bum that was her own business, but pretty poor business, it seemed to me. I intended to be comfortable and attractive; of course taking no more than was necessary—only a few bags and hatboxes and maybe one small trunk. I intended to dress smart but suitable, and of course her comparing her flivver to our Colby-Droit was all jealousy.

Well, Maison wasn't the only one give me a jolt. Because hardly had I left her when I ran into a friend of ma's, Mrs. Boyd, and her husband, which used to run the boarding house in Rochester where I have many a time stayed when on tower. Now, I thought, I will get a rise, and at least somebody will be surprised over my trip. But nothing stirring. When we had exchanged healths and so forth and ect. I dropped California on them. But they stood the shock surprisingly.

"Well, well! Now ain't that nice!" says old Mrs. Boyd. "You'll enjoy it real well, dearie. Only be sure and take plenty of warm clothes, and see that Jim has his winter underwear. There will be plenty of cold mornings in Colorado and New Mexico when you will be glad of them."

Digitized by Google

"And always carry a five-gallon can of gas and a gallon of oil," says old Mr. Boyd. "We found that very important on our first trip. If I was you I'd go right to Bushman's to the sporting goods department and get your stuff there. They know just what you need to take."

When I had got my breath I said good-by and beat it in confusion. I began to feel that if I wanted any distinction or class I had better remain the only one who had never driven to California.

And so I was more or less prepared for what I found at Bushman's sporting goods department, because I did go there. In fact, I almost ran there, because I began to realize I was as green as a new extra having a test made for the pictures. I was on my way but I had no ticket; I was headed for a strange country and I didn't know the language. What I didn't know about this trip I was about to pull off would fill all my suitcases and then some. And it being the age of specialists, I determined to allow the specialist on Bushman's top floor to practice on me and pull my ignorance out by the roots.

Well, anyways, I hurried over, and there for once I found somebody who was at least professionally interested in my trip. This was a fine-looking, athletic young man who had grown hale and hearty in the breezy atmosphere of the sports-goods department, what with living among the canoes and tennis nets, croquet sets, bicycles and sweaters day after day. At least that was what I thought at first, but after I had talked to him a little and told him where I was going I seen he was the real thing and no bluff but did really go out-of-doors a lot in the summer, and so forth, and actually had used personally himself the line of goods he was selling, and I'll say that is a type of man which will go far. What is further, he hadn't been to California by motor, but wanted to some day, and

Digitized by Google

in the meantime he had fitted out over two hundred people for the trip.

"Going to camp?" he says. "No? Sort of a pity. It's the real way to enjoy it. But, of course, if your time is limited—well, you must have an ax, a good, practical one, a collapsible water bucket, and of course a desert water bag. Five gallons will be big enough for you people, I guess." And then he showed me something which looked like what potatoes come in by the bulk, and how any water was to stay in it had me guessing, but he said it would. Then he sold me a tow rope and the canvas thing called a tarpaulin, the one Maison had talked about, and it seems Mr. Hiyou, the salesman, agreed with her about it. Then he sold me a suitcase which turned out to be a kitchen cabinet when you opened it up, with dishes and knives and forks and a vacuum bottle and everything but the kitchen stove in it, and then he sold me the kitchen stove in condensed form. But the cutest thing he sold me was called a Puller.

When I seen it first I thought a steel derrick had had kittens and that this was one of them. It was made up of boy's-size steel cables and a couple of jiggers like the deuce of spades which you was supposed to stick in the ground and then hitch the hook part to the car and turn on the handle, and there you were! I mean, you were supposed to be out of whatever you was in when you started. It was the kind of thing you see advertised as being worked by a sweet young bride in a Marcel wave, a spotless gift apron and a permanent smile. I bought it, because by that time I was in a sort of daze and would of bought anything he told me, and feeling kind of depressed because of the constant trouble we were expected to have. So finally I says, "Look here, brother," I says, "can't you sell me something cheerful?" I says. "All you done so far is load me up with stuff for trouble. It looks like

Digitized by Google

you expected us to have a pretty poor time of it. How about the pleasure aspects of this trip?"

"You'll find them along the route," he says. "I haven't seen them myself. But good heavens, think where you are going—the prairies, the Rockies, the Cañon! And besides," he says, and it was the best mouthful so far—"besides," he says, "a lot of people go the whole way without any trouble at all. Why, I had a feller in here the other day went all the way without changing a tire! These things you are getting are like carrying an umbrella to keep it from starting to rain. By the way, what are you going to wear?"

"Why, clothes—motor clothes," I says, "with lots of linens and a bathing suit for when I get to the coast."

"Well, if I might suggest it," says he, "take riding clothes. You will wear them continually west of the Rockies."

Well, that sounded like good sense to me, so I thanked him and went off to do what little shopping I had left, which was merely a dust coat, a rain coat, goggles, a camera so's I'd be able to get even with some of my friends when I got home—only, of course, I decided we would not take pictures of each other and of the car, which is all the kind of subjects anybody ever seems to bring back from a trip with them and says "Here is ma in Colorado Springs," but ma is hiding the Springs entirely, and you wouldn't even know it was her, only they told you so, but say "Oh, yes, how interesting!" so as not to hurt their feelings.

So having suffered a lot, I intended we would snap only the most interesting things and afterward paste the pictures in a book for a kind of record of the trip to show to the people who really liked us and to the ones who would not otherwise go home early.

So I bought the camera and a sweater and a couple of

Digitized by Google

new bags, because of course we had none of the right size in the house, and a person never does have the right size bag for the place they are going to this time. And when I had this all done, and refrained from again mentioning California to any of the salespeople for fear of hearing about their own trip out, I took the precaution to go to the drug store and buy a few emergency things to carry in the bus.

I didn't want to load it up more than I had to, because the advice printed on the map said to load the car light. And so I only bought iodine and cholera remedy in case we drank bad water, and first-aid stuff, and a lot of soap and two tubes of Jim's shaving cream and four of tooth paste, which was a good idea, only in the end I forgot the tooth pastes and took the cream and forgot his razor, and it seems half a tube of shaving cream lasts him a year. But that, as the poet says, is getting ahead of myself. And then I bought a book which I found on the drug-store table which was called Transcontinental Tours—full of photos of cars stuck in mud, but it was highly recommended by the drug clerk, who had used it on his own trip. And then I was through and went home.

On the front steps of our elegant limestone front, lemon-backed apartment I at last got one satisfaction for which I had been looking for two whole days. Coming down the steps was Mrs. Ellen O'Rourke, the lady who has our limousine take our wash around to her place every week. I had only been her acquaintance a little while, but I liked her real well. She was, aside from the limousine stuff, a quite old-fashioned lady. I think she was Irish too. So when I met her this night coming out from a visit with our janitor I stopped to speak.

"Mrs. O'Rourke," I says, "have you ever motored to California?"

"Indade and I have not!" says she. "Glory be to God,

Digitized by Google

don't be after tellin' me yer going all that way in an auttermobile!"

"I am!" I says in triumph.

"Saints presarve us!" says she, flinging up her hands in excitement. "What a marvelous thing to be doing! I never heard the like!"

"Bless you for them words!" I says, and I kissed her on both cheeks and rushed into the house, happy at last that someone was as surprised as I was over my going.

Well, when I got upstairs the things from the stores had beaten me home and was heaped in the middle of our period drawing-room making it look like the period intended was the Middle Ages, and a fair to middling reproduction of a torture chamber at that. And there looking down at the pile of chains, pulleys, axes and buckets, sweaters, medicines and so forth and ect. was Jim smoking a cigarette in his shirt sleeves, his hair as smooth as patent leather, but his temper all mussed up and wore out and his nerves frazzled by the hard day's shopping I had done. He at once started picking on me, which is the normal husband's way of showing appreciation of a good wife.

"Say, for the love of Alaska, where do you think we are going?" he says the very minute I got in the door. "What is all this junk for? When do you intend for us to use it?"

"I haven't bought a thing except absolutely necessary ones!" I says indignantly. "We will need every one of them—just you wait and see!"

"Wait my eye!" says Jim. "If we are going to need all them things on this trip I'm not going on it! Where are we going to sit with all this stuff in the car—tell me that?"

"The Colby-Droit is a four-passenger sports model, ain't she?" I demanded. "And there will only be the three of us, counting Rollo," I says. "We got all the room

Digitized by Google

in the world. Besides, I'm only taking a suitcase and a bag, a dressing case, a hatbox and three pillows, besides my golf clubs and camera. There'll be lots of room to spare."

"Hell!" says Jim to show he was a man. "I've a good mind not to take Rollo!"

"What do you know about car anatomy?" I says. "A swell time we'd have in the middle of the desert if she busted! It's all right to bluff to your friends, but not to your wife on a trip like this. We can't go without a mechanic, and you know it."

"Well, I suppose that's the truth," he says. "Of course, I can do any ordinary thing to the boat, but there had better be two of us men in case of anything serious going wrong."

This was the fourth time we had settled this question since the trip was thought of, and so we went on to fights we had had only two or three times, like what to carry or about getting everything arranged for ma and the baby. And I made no further remarks about taking the chauffeur, but was determined we would do so. Somehow or other I never feel I really trust Jim about the car, either in driving it or in fixing it, and I would no more of made the trip without a mechanic than I would of made it barefoot, and I knew perfectly well that Jim wouldn't of either.

And so, believe me, when after one week of struggle, of packing the suitcases and unpacking them again and repacking them so's we could take out what we would want in the different climates we expected to find without disturbing the rest, and then forgetting something and having to do it all over again; and after paying our bills and getting travelers' checks and saying good-by to everybody—well, and so, believe me, when the day before we

Digitized by Google

was to start Rollo the chauffeur give notice that he wasn't going with us, well, that was some blow!

At first we thought it was a hold-up for a raise, but money was no object, and he also claimed love had nothing to do with it—at least not love of any woman. It was the city—he couldn't leave it.

"I just can't do it," he says. "I can't leave little old New York for those jay burgs. I tried to make up my mind to it, but nix! I'm real sorry, folks, but I'm not going!"

And after all we'd done for that man! There's the servant problem for you! It certainly got my goat and had me worried, because of what I have said about the car and Jim. And Jim was worried sick too.

Well, we telephoned every place, but to no avail. It seemed like nobody with a reference wanted to leave the city. And we was due to start next morning at nine A.M. I couldn't—wouldn't wait a day or two, because by now, of course, our contracts was signed and we had to be in Los Angeles by October tenth. It meant go without a mechanic or give up the trip, and I was not the one to do it with my things all packed. And then at two P.M. Rollo come around with the limousine to take me on one or two last errands while Jim was over to the employment agency on a last hope and said the speedometer on the Colby was broken. I stood looking at him too deeply peeved for tears. He had it with him, having taken it out of the other car. Of course, the speedometer was busted! What was a person to expect? Huh? That's what I thought, or as much of what I thought as is fit to repeat. What I said aloud was, "Well, Rollo," I says calmly, "there is only one thing to do. Drive me right up to the speedometer place and I'll wait there until they fix it."

Well, Rollo says all right, he knew where the place was,

Digitized by Google

and I got in to be absolutely sure it was done, and we went on uptown, I boiling with rage but determined now to start to-morrow as per schedule if I died for it. And when I come to sufficiently to look around the limousine had stopped in front of a tall garagy-looking building up in West Sixty-seventh Street. It was a part of the city that is all like that—big ten-story garages, supply places and what not, with any number of tough-looking motor pirates hanging around, and no end of cars of every kind. Rollo left the engine running, jumped down and stuck his head in the door.

"I'll just go in and get the man to take a look at it if he's here, Mrs. Smith," he says, the brute, and then he shut the door and faded into the building. And I waited, huddled up in a corner of the back seat and as sulky and mad as they make 'em. But I didn't have to wait long, and what happened was done so quick I could scarcely take it all in.

Down the block a police whistle blew, and one second later a well-dressed perfectly strange young man sprang onto the front seat of my limousine, threw it into gear, the car lurched forward and in another instant we were moving off down the street at top speed.

Digitized by Google

V

BELIEVE me, with that car of mine shooting down towards the Hudson, driven by a crazy man or a thief and a perfect stranger to me, I was in a worse fix than even when I made that famous eighteen-part million-dollar serial, The Perils of Palmetta, because of course this time it was real, with a police whistle blowing instead of a camera clicking behind us. But for three blocks, which we covered them in under two minutes, I could hardly realize that the director would not yell for us to come back and that I was actually being kidnapped and no fillum-flam about it.

When this horrible fact finally did register with me, however, I commenced a sort of weaving back and forth on my seat like a blind puppy, making little noises. I was so scared I couldn't make any louder sounds. And then I began to remember the pieces I had lately seen in the papers about murder cars, bond thefts and pieces of bodies of the female sect being shipped away in trunks or fished out of the river and so forth and ect. like a drownding person is supposed to during their last moment. Only one sane thing stood out real clear in my mind, and that was my diamond bar pin and my five-carrot ring, and I decided I would save them at all costs except my life, and by some feminine instinct I slipped them off and tucked them down the side of the seat under the upholstery. I done this like an automat, and then as we took a sudden swing southward on Ninth Avenue I was thrown violently across the seat, and there was a traffic cop on the crossing.

"Help!" I yelled, plunging toward the window.

Digitized by Google

But what do you know? The cop thought I was flirting with him, smiled and waved back at me, and let my new chauffeur dart through ahead of the rest of the traffic! As he did so I realized that in falling forward I had grabbed hold of the speaking tube so that when I yelled it had been covered by my hand. And at the same moment it come over me that the thief didn't know there was anybody inside the limousine! He wasn't kidnapping me, because he didn't know that I was there!

Right away I set out to cure that, and pounded on the glass with all my might. The thief was a good driver, I'll say, because, while it must of scared him half to death, he only swerved a little—escaped an elevated pillar and darted around two trucks before he turned his head. He give me one swift look—his mouth wide, his eyes staring, his whole face like a Japanese mask with astonishment. Then he turned back to the wheel, and instead of stopping stepped on her good and hard, and commenced a drive the like of which would of made a picture's fortune in the old pie-comedy days, darting across one street and back again up another—shooting along down a avenue and winding in and out among drays and trucks, pushcarts and delivery wagons at about forty miles a hour, but without even nicking one of them. The car, which Rollo was always kicking about, was smooth as butter in this guy's hands. I had to notice it, even at this time.

But I wasn't sitting still all this while admiring the bird's driving—not exactly! I was raising the very devil and all, but apparently it meant nothing in his desperate young life. He never even turned to look back again, no matter how I pounded on the glass or yelled into the speaking tube that I was Marie La Tour and I couldn't disappear without it being noticed and my husband would kill him and my cousin was a police captain and would have him pinched and a lot more. He never seemed to

Digitized by Google

hear me, but just hunched his shoulders and kept his mind on his business, whatever it was.

Was I scared? Oh, boy! But by now I was thinking clearer, and I realized this trip couldn't last forever. As we got further downtown we was bound to run into a traffic jam, and all I would have to do was open the door and step out. We were coming down Tenth Avenue toward Fifty-ninth Street now, and there was certain to be crosstown traffic and a cop there. And I was right—a block away I could see street cars going over. But the devil was with my driver, because at that very minute the whistle blew and we sailed by that crossing without even a hesitation, much less a stop, and at the same time I suddenly realized there was windows to that bus of mine which could be let down, which only goes to show what a boob a person can be not to of thought of this before.

But when I did remember, it took me several minutes to open one, because they are the old-fashioned kind that work on a strap, and you have to tease them down even in calm weather, and at the rate we was traveling it took longer than per usual.

My efforts got some results, just the same, because the driver evidently saw what I was up to and decided it was time to quit. At Fifty-seventh Street he turned west off the roaring Avenue into the comparative quiet of the side street, and to my astonishment parked smoothly at the curb in front of some quiet-looking brownstone apartments where only a few kids was playing on the sidewalk, jumped down from his seat, opened the door and stuck his head in with a grin.

"It's all right, Miss La Tour," he says calmly. "I guess we gave them the slip. Where shall I take you to now?"

Digitized by Google

And I fell back on my seat without for a moment a word to say. The man was young Tom Westman.

"You!" I says, completely taken off my feet, or would of been, only of course I was already sitting down. "Mr. Westman!"

"Correct!" he says briskly. "May I come in a minute and sit down? We can talk more convenient and less conspicuous."

Hardly knowing what I was about, I moved over and Tom Westman got in and shut the door.

"Whew!" he says, taking off his hat and wiping his forehead, which was damp with excitement. "That was a narrow thing! Miss La Tour, first of all, I owe you an apology. Lord, how scared you must have been! Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" I says, bewildered. "Young man, is stealing cars your business, or did you know this was mine?"

"No—to both questions," he says. "Miss La Tour, don't get scared again, but I'm a desperate man. I'm in a lot of trouble, and I'd have taken any car that happened to be there. I had to, that's all! I'd have left it some place and telephoned the police where it was later if it hadn't happened by a miracle of good luck to have you in it. At least I suppose that was in the back of my mind when I did this."

"But what have you done?" I demanded to know. "What have you done outside of pinching my car?"

"I can't tell you," he says grimly enough now, and peering out of the window to be sure no one was after us yet. "I can't tell you a thing, Miss La Tour, except that I haven't committed any crime except stealing—or borrowing—you and your limousine. I swear by all that I hold sacred, that is the truth! But if I was to be caught

Digitized by Google

right now I couldn't prove it to save my life. And 'my life' is right—it might easily mean that."

"But what are you running away for if you are so innocent?" I says.

"I tell you it was necessary—absolutely necessary!" he exclaimed. "Can't you—won't you believe me?"

I was watching his troubled young face real close while he talked, and there was something about his eyes—the same thing which I had noticed that night when I had talked to him down at the Mocking Turtle—that made me inclined to believe in him.

"I'll keep your secret," I says doubtfully. "But I do think you owe it to me to let me in on it."

"I owe it to somebody else not to tell!" he says desperately. "To somebody who is very dear to me. It means everything in my life—can you get that? And it's only for to-night I need your silence. I'll—I'll have to leave town to-morrow—to-night, if possible—and you won't be troubled by me again. I swear I'm not a crook. You can look up my record in the Red Cross and as a mechanic too. I've been a steady worker always. Believe me, I am doing this for reasons you couldn't help having sympathy over if you knew them."

There was a ring to his voice which listened to me like the real thing. I remembered how well I had liked him the time before, and somehow, in spite of my good sense, I decided he was telling the truth. After all, hadn't I seen hundreds of pictures with this very idea of a innocent crook at the bottom of them? Besides, if he wasn't on the level, why hadn't he run away after he parked instead of wasting all this time talking, or why didn't he hold me up or something?

I decided to ask anyways.

"Why didn't you beat it," I says, "when you got down off the front seat?"

Digitized by Google

"Because when I saw it was you," he says, "I wanted to explain. And I was sorry for frightening you. We are safe for a minute or two, and I wanted to be sure you was all right. And now shall I drive you home, or would you rather I just left you here and went away? I'll do just as you tell me. This is a big city, and it's perfectly possible that I can do it safe enough, although by now your driver will have given the cops the license number. What do you want me to do?"

Well, I just sat for a moment and thought hard.

"What did you say would happen if you was caught?" I says at last.

"They'd let me go," he replied, which was not at all what I expected. "They'd let me go. But somebody else —the one I told you of—would suffer."

"But what did you mean then by talking about your life being in danger?" I says quick, and watching him very sharp.

"I meant my life in the other sense," he says simply. And there was something in his voice decided me. Maybe I was a fool, but a person has to take a chance once in a while as they walk through life, and the same is true of motoring through it.

"See here, Tom Westman," I says slowly, "I believe you, and I'm going to take a chance on you. You are in a hole and so am I. To-morrow morning at nine o'clock my husband and me are leaving for California by automobile, and we haven't got any chauffeur. Do you want to go?"

Well, I guess that handed him as big a surprise as he had handed me that afternoon, all right, all right. He looked like he thought it was just too much luck, and he was pretty near right.

"Do you mean that?" he cried.

"I sure do!" I says. "Always providing Jim hasn't

Digitized by Google

got the place already filled from the agency. You see, I look at it this way: Whoever he hires on such short notice we will be taking a terrible chance on, and I don't know but that I'd rather know in the first place that the chauffeur was in the habit of stealing the car, kidnapping people and dodging the police. At that, you probably got a cleaner record than a whole lot of drivers."

"You can look me up—have your husband do it," he says earnestly. "Ask the people I'll send you to anything you wish. But don't, please, tell them why you want to know." His face was all lighted up like—well, like a church. And then he got a thought which switched the current off.

"But everyone will know you folks. Why, you will be in the spotlight the whole ways to the coast, and they'd nick me in a minute!" he says.

"Nothing of the kind!" I says, getting more interested all the time. "We are going without any trumpets at all for reasons of my own," I says. "And being spotted will be the least of your worries," I says. "Just so long as you are absolutely sure you ain't murdered anybody or anything!"

"I swear!" he says solemnly.

"Well, then," I says, "let's go! Rollo's other uniform was on its way to winter quarters. It's in that box. Put on the coat and cap and let's go home and talk Jim into doing a little telephoning."

"*Oy, gewicht!*" said the boy. "You will never regret this. By my mother, I swear it!"

And then he done like I told him with the coat and ect. and actually on my word we got home to Riverside Drive without a hitch. And when we arrived it was by then dark. I told young Westman to leave the bus and come up with me, and he did, and there was Jim, waiting with

Digitized by Google

all the patience and good humor of a wild animal in a strange cage.

"Well, did you get a chauffeur?" I says gayly coming in.

"Yes, I did—not!" says Jim. "And how you think we are going to start without—— Hello, who have we with us?"

"The chauffeur I so effectively, though a mere woman, have engaged," I says. "Come in, Tom, and get the razoo over with!"

And razoo was right. When Jim was wised up to the facts he hit the ceiling so hard he should of made a dent in it. But when we commenced talking references, and one of them was a agent Jim knew real well, why, he kept his feet on the orientals long enough to use the phone, and presently come back twenty degrees cooler to say Kaufman says the boy is O. K. and he recommends him highly.

"Well," says Jim at length, "I suppose we aren't taking any more chance than we would be with a perfect stranger. But just put this in your bank and draw on it, Westman—we are trusting you about this mystery thing, and heaven help you if you get us any sour publicity!"

Well, Westman promised and went away, after agreeing he would come back at eight-thirty prompt next morning, because we wanted to get a early start and make Baltimore by night unless he was arrested in the meanwhile.

Well, then I went down and got the diamonds I had parked in the upholstery, and then to save trouble Jim took the car around to the garage and paid off Rollo, who turned up there, and the next morning he went around again and got the Colby-Droit, which by now had the somewhat mended speedometer in it, and brought it to the house. And Tom Westman wasn't pinched overnight, but showed up on time with a neat suit and one small bag and a face that in the clear daylight didn't look like he

Digitized by Google

and crime had the least thing to do with each other, and also he looked the engine over voluntarily while we was getting in the bags.

Well, I will say we got started without any unnecessary fuss and nonsense. My bag didn't have to be opened for the last time more than three times, and I only went back five times to kiss my baby, which was pretty good for a mother who was leaving her child to the mercies of its grandmother. And then when Jim had strapped the small bags on the running board and taken them off again and strapped the big ones in their place and undone the straps again to cover them with the tarpaulin and re-strapped them he come up and got the rest of the things.

We really took very little stuff with us, having only two big bags and the Puller on one running board, the tool box on the other, my dressing bag, Jim's ditto, the four chains in a sack, the ax, the water bucket, the lunch wagon, the vacuum bottle, camera, our two sets of golf clubs just in case, Tom's bag, three pillows, a cardboard hatbox with my other hat in it, and Welcome, our doormat dog—one of these Sealyhams that is so fashionable, and I wouldn't leave him behind for worlds, even though ma, now that she was sure I was on my way and couldn't turn back, kept muttering insults about women which left their child but took the hound, which had just enough truth in it to hurt, but I would not give her any satisfaction by showing it.

Well, anyways, when all this stuff was in the bus you could see we was going some place. I thought it looked real snappy—sort of Far and Wide and Westward ho! But to Jim it looked like a good subject for complaint.

"What do you want them cushions for?" he says. "We look like the King and Queen of the first of May," he says. "And that hatbox! Let's can some of this junk! Anybody would think we was going to Alaska!"

"Better take them," I says. "Here we been waiting

Digitized by Google

half an hour for you to get that car packed, and now you wanner unpack it again. Leave it alone! We'll never get started at this rate!"

"Well, all right! Just wait for one more thing," says Jim. "Just hold on until I set the speedo blank, and we are on our way!"

"Oh, and I forgot the lap robe!" I says, starting to get out of the front seat after just having got into it.

"Oh, to hell with it!" says Jim, climbing in back with the other luggage. "What do you want to delay the game for any more? We'll get to Baltimore after the town is closed, anyhow, at this rate!"

"Who's delaying the game?" I says indignantly, but getting back again into my seat next to the driver. "All right, we'll buy another one if we need it—shoot her, Tom!"

And young Westman, who was giving a first-class imitation of a stiff-necked chauffeur, but anxiously watching the street out of the corner of his eye, stepped on her, and by the Great Night Lights of Broadway we was off! Actually on our way!

Words cannot picture the queer thrill it give me to know in my heart we was all set to do in luxury that which some of our ancestors had done with ox carts and sheer will power. Of course, we was yet right in the same little old Manhattan streets that was so familiar, and still and all they didn't seem the same—I'll say they didn't! They had a kind of magic to them as I set there on the front seat with a heavy chiffon veil and a dust coat over my oldest suit, the dog in my lap and the blue-book in my hand. I felt like it couldn't be true, and yet there we was, the top down and the clear September sun shining on us dazzlingly, the air just full of pep like it sometimes is in New York. I felt like I could sing. But instead, as we was crossing on the Twenty-third Street ferry to

Digitized by Google

Hoboken, I turned to Jim and says softly, "I found your toothbrush in the bathroom and put it in, dear," I says.

And Jim give me a peach of a smile.

"Thanks, cutie," he says. "Say, isn't this fun?"

"I'll say it is!" I says, smiling back.

And so we both realized we was still quite fond of each other, and it was like two sweethearts meeting at the old mill stream after being in a crowd for weeks and weeks, or the beginning of a honeymoon. And yet we hadn't even got as far as Hoboken! I felt soft and generous and didn't want to leave anybody out, so I turned to young Westman.

"Seems hard to realize we are really on our way," I says. "Will it be new to you?"

"I've never been anywhere in America more than a hundred miles from New York," he says. "Will we see any Indians, do you think?"

He was just like a twelve-year-old kid.

"I'll say we will!" I says.

"Oy, gewalt!" says Tom enthusiastically.

"I feel free from every care," I says. "Why, I haven't even seen the morning paper, and I don't want to! I'm going to see America, and, believe me, that's all the news I want!"

Westman made a funny sound at that, but at the time I scarcely noticed it, because a minute later we shot out onto the Hoboken Cliff Road, and I settled back to the observing which was the main object of my, as the poet says, sentimental journey.

It has always been my way, when starting off to any place I haven't been before, to look for things which will be strange and new, even before I come to them. I get all set like an eager camera to snap the first out-of-the-ordinary thing I bump into, and while, of course, I couldn't rightly expect to see anything real Western for some little

Digitized by Google

time yet, I was on the key five, as the French say, right from the drop of the rope. And so I didn't hesitate about taking in facts and impressions of my dear country beginning with the direct route to Philadelphia.

That is to say, I would of begun my observations on it, only the road was giving a imitation of a shell-shocked battlefield, and so most of my observation had to confine itself to which part of the car to hang onto and where it was safest to land when I hit the seat again. I don't know is that road left the way it is—all concrete waves and unfinished artesian wells—as a kind of preliminary training for the transcontinental tourist, but I guess it must be for that reason, and it's the truth that while we later saw some fierce roads we saw absolutely nothing any worse for paving.

Under these conditions most people would of been blind to what they was passing through except in the sense of bodily torture, but being as I was, out to see my National Real Estate, I managed to realize that we went through a lot of factories—whole towns of them—and a person would hardly believe it, but some of them buildings actually covered acres of ground—no kidding! And it was kind of a shock to see how much stuff that a person only thinks of as sort of growing on a store counter is actually made. We felt quite excited whenever we recognized the home of a brand of anything, especially if we used the article ourselves. It seemed sort of funny, someways, to see the place where flivvers was assembled or rubber bands come from, or so forth and ect. It wasn't pretty, not after we left Newark, with its lovely park and artistic buildings around it, and got onto the main-traveled line, following the Lincoln Highway. It was sure a grim, smoky stretch, but pretty near everything in the world seemed to be made there, and Jim and young Westman kept pulling statistics about costs and capital on each other about these concerns which would make your hair stand on end; and of course

Digitized by Google

they may not of been correct, but it give them pleasure and sounded terrible wealthy, and we didn't stop to check up on the companies' books as we went by. However, right or wrong, there sure was money tied up there; but what it had done to the landscape was a crime until we left Trenton, which was not full of colonial uniforms as I had sort of expected, because of always thinking of Gen. Geo. Washington being there, but which was full of factories instead.

Here the houses commenced to be a different style, and pretty soon we begun to go through these Jersey truck gardens you read about—big farms, they are, not auto factories as you might think from the name—but farms with celery you could smell a long ways off, and peach trees turning pale yellow and pink and lovely advertising signs as the principal crops. The closer we come to Philly the better the roads got, and the prettier the houses—lots of them was of stone—a sort of yellow color, with high roofs, and looked like they had been built forever, but custom built, and would last as long again, and a good example of the great truth that economy is the road to ruin, if you get me.

Well, Philly was no news to me nor to Jim either on account of we had often played it, and so after we had eaten a deservedly well-known fish blue-plate luncheon by mutual agreement, because soon we would be going inland to where the lobster was not and the oyster languished in the can; and taking turns, he and I going in first while Tom sat in the open car to watch the bags, and then we sat in it while he ate, and for the first time the fact occurred to us that all those things we had brought was going to be—as Jim put it—a hellova nuisance, because we couldn't possibly check them every time we ate, and we couldn't leave them either.

Well, anyways, we ate and beat it, and done our best

Digitized by Google

getting out of the Quaker City, because some of the streets have numbers and some have names, and I notice it's the same with all cops and all natives in that place or any other—they think you are a boob if you don't know just where Hoosis Street is, and they say, why, it's just beyond Whatyoucallit Avenue, and when you own up to not knowing where that is, either, they look at you like they neither pitied nor hated you, but condescended to help your ignorance with a contempt too deep for words.

But after a while we found our way south in spite of directions, and started off sort of sick about would the road be as rotten going out as it was coming in. And I'll say right now that one of the peculiar things about a long trip is the-worst-is-yet-to-come feeling you get about the roads. You always expect the next to be like the last one, and it generally is, only more so. But for once this didn't go, and after half an hour we found ourselves actually floating along over a boulevard that wound around and over the prettiest hills you ever want to see—small, friendly hills—one much like another, covered thick with tame trees and with kind-looking farms tucked away in unexpected places like a Merry Christmas card without the snow, and you sort of expected to see a motto at the foot of each grade, but you hardly saw even a billboard, and I sort of missed them at that. It was like riding through the same country over and over again, and I got kind of drowsy over it and took to listening to a slap which had come into the engine. Next day I noticed Westman had taken it out, but he didn't show it to me the way they did with my appendix.

Well, anyways, these Pennsylvania hills was very pretty, but just about like a lot of country I had seen before, and it was not until we crossed the Susquehanna on a long bridge that I felt we had commenced to get into the wilds. I don't really know just why that word "Susquehanna" stands out so sharp in my mind; but it does, and I always

Digitized by Google

see the vision of a statue of General Sherman when I hear it. Somehow this river looked the part. It would make a swell location for a melo—it is so wild and fierce, full of stones and little shaggy islands and great gloomy Xmas trees climbing up the hilly banks like proud soldiers in retreat. I made the boys stop on the far side while I took a long look at the melancholy, wild grandeur of the river raging down to the Chesapeake. Gee, I'd sure like to play a mountaineer's daughter or something in that location! And it is already historic in the life of the camera, because here is where Jim committed his first crime against the art of photography—a new vice in him, and one which alas! grew worse as the weeks went by.

But did he take a picture of that wonderful river? He did not! He took one of me and the dog and Tom Westman sitting in the car.

"You got to have people in a picture," he says, when I complained, "to give it any human interest. Besides, the river looks like nothing at all, in the finder!"

Well, we got into the city of Baltimore late that afternoon, and went to see a show that night, and I must say I was disappointed not finding the town more shabby and quaint and kind of run down and everything like you are led to expect a Southern city to be. It was far from it, being much like a little piece of upper New York—say Madison Avenue at Fifty-ninth Street, only bigger and noisier and about as quaint as Wall Street. I and Jim walked around for two solid hours looking for the picturesque poverty of the ruined South, but to no avail. The nearest approach to anything old-fashioned we found was a café where we went in the swellest taxi I had been in to date, we having let Tom take the car, and where we had even better sea food than in Philly, and served in a dining room with a black-and-white marble floor and a coon waiter who said thank you for a four-bit tip. I

Digitized by Google

thought this must be the best food in the world, because I never ate any so good in a N. Y. café, but I didn't know the half of it—nor learned as yet that New York knows less about what is good food than any town in the U. S. A., but that is again getting ahead of myself. We were to eat and learn, as the poet says, or maybe it was the copy book—poets and eating don't seem quite right someways.

Well, next morning we went to a big fancy grocery—a branch of the one where we deal at home—and bought some chocolate and biscuits and oranges, "Because," says Jim, "we are now really starting West, and we don't know will we be able to buy them before we come to the desert, and may need them."

Actually! He said it, and I didn't know it was a joke, and neither did he! That's all we knew about the West. We was always talking about the desert, too, from the very start. It kind of hung over us with desperate excitement —fear and joy well shaken up with a little ice, if you get me. Maybe it was having the desert water bag and never knowing where to put it when we repacked the car kind of kept it in our minds. We often spoke of Indians, jack rabbits and prairie dogs and the Grand Canyon, too, but mostly of the desert, each trying to kid the other into believing it would be a mere nothing—but thereby confessing their own fear that it would be something fierce. For a sample, every time we come to a bad road we would say, "I guess this will seem like nothing when we get to the desert," and that was intended to be cheering.

Well, anyways, we bought our iron rations, as we called them, at the big grocery which made one more thing to carry. And then we got down all the bags and the golf clubs and pillows and hatbox and so on, because this being our first night out we had no better sense than to take them all up to the room with us. And when it was all in the car we managed to squeeze ourselves and Welcome into it

Digitized by Google

as well, and started on our way again, taking the National Old Trails road and quarreling violently among ourselves over who was responsible for getting started so late and where is that road map and why did the garage man tell us to take that short cut and what color bands to follow on the telegraph poles and other early morning courtesies of a pleasure trip by motor.

"There, damit," says Jim when we was about thirty miles out of town, "I forgot to get the morning paper!"

You would of thought it was his pocketbook. But Tom Westman came to the rescue—kind of.

"I got one here," he says, fishing it out from under him. "It's not much good, I'm afraid, because I used a piece to clean off the step, but here it is! There wasn't much on the part I used, anyways," he says, and hands it to me and I handed it back to Jim.

Almost all the front page was gone, and Jim swore at this and didn't speak again while we rolled along through a unfinished-looking farming country, passing load after load of corn on the ear being dragged to market by horses —no flivvers or trucks seemed to be around. We didn't pass a single farmer driving one, but lots of buggies and heavy teams.

And then all at once, while I was thinking where would I begin spreading my anti-Red propaganda, and why hadn't I worn my other suit, and what made me marry, anyway, and other feminine thoughts, we rounded a curve and come onto what I first took to be a big set for a costume picture, but which was actually the town of Frederick, Maryland. Jim spotted it as soon as I did, and we stopped the car to look around, and, believe me, that little town is as beautiful as a dream.

Nothing seemed to of been changed since the Year One. The main streets was paved with cobbles and climbed a steep hill with brightly colored little houses huddling one

Digitized by Google

above the other. There was funny little shops with small windowpanes and hound dogs lying lazily in the sun. Halfway up was the place where Barbara Frietchie's house had been. We saw the plate—a sort of tombstone for the building.

"Who was Barb?" says Jim. "I think I heard of her," he says.

"Didn't she invent the American flag?" I says.

"No, she didn't," says Westman. "Don't you know the poem about who harms a hair on yon gray head?"

"Dies like a dog! March on, he said!" says Jim and I together, and then we laughed and marched on—back to the bus after I had snapped Jim standing by the cross what marked the spot. And then Jim drove for a change, and we kept on endlessly sliding over perfect roads and wooded hills.

I'll say the main roads of Maryland are something to dream about. I had never seen anything so perfect. The one we was on lay like a black satin ribbon over hill and dale—such steep hills and such brief dales that it was like the Coney Island roller coaster. It was like flying, and with no traffic cops and apparently no speed limit Jim just stepped on her, coasting down one grade at sixty miles a hour and halfway up the next before he had to go into gear. It was a regular game, and I soon seen I had brought the wrong kind of hat for that wind, because it kept getting tore off my head and ruining my hair net. By the time we had shot through Hagerstown, a place noticeable for the fact that I saw a hat there exactly like what I had on and had bought on Broadway and Forty-seventh Street, N. Y. C., which was particularly snappy and, I had supposed, exclusive.

Well, after this the hills began getting higher and higher, and finally we come to one which I thought we would never get to the top of it, but we did, with a boiling

Digitized by Google

radiator, and stopped at a place marked "Summit," after Summit, N. J., I guess. It wasn't a town, though, but only the top of a mountain, with a view which would of been wonderful, only you couldn't see it because it was by now commencing to rain.

Just the same, we all got out while the radiator cooled off and stood on the edge of the view which was full of fog and wet pine trees further down below than you would of believed possible—a real neat, made-to-order, picture-book mountain landscape, it was.

Several other cars had developed asthma or appendicitis or high blood pressure on the way up, and so we had to share the parking space and view. There was three motorcycles with side-car wives all from the same place—Jacksonville, Florida, it was—and, believe me, you can't tell me the South is slow after that, because these folks was neither toughs nor sports nor yet idle rich, but perfectly good members of the middle-aged middle classes, and it astonished and fascinated me to see them. It seemed to me there must be a mistake some place. I was dying to ask where they were going in khaki bloomers at their time of life, but didn't dare, and was kind of floored to think they had got that far.

Up to now we had been the only tourists we had met—we'd had the transcontinental trip to ourselves—and it give me an awful queer, not altogether gracious feeling to meet up with this bunch.

There was a cheap little Climber roadster coughing and panting on the resting park, and across its shabby back was written in chalk "Connecticut to California," and the owners was standing enjoying the place where the view was on fine days, all dressed like a field army. They was a couple of fellows who might of been mechanics. And then there were the Peterkins. Of course, I didn't know right off it was them—that come later. But never

Digitized by Google

will I forget my first seeing that family. There was eight of them, and on my word of honor as a actress, they was traveling in a fliv!

There was pa to commence with—a big, fat man almost bursting out of his khaki overalls—and ma, a smiling little fatty with a three-year-old in her arms. Then there was a real pretty girl of maybe nineteen, the oldest daughter. Next come Grandma Peterkin, with no teeth except at meal times; Aunt Susie, who might of been ma's useful old-maid sister; and two medium-sized youngsters, a boy and a girl.

There was a spring and mattress fastened above the spares on the back of their boat, and hanging below that was a bucket, ax, two water bags and a tow rope. Both running boards was shut in with a sort of wicket gates like they use on elevators between floors, and the space between them and the actual car was packed to the extreme limit with bags and bundles of every kind, and from the ceiling, or framework of the top, hung paper hat bags, mysterious-looking packages and different odds and ends, while both front mud guards was simply stuffed with tent poles and canvas. The car had a New Jersey license.

But they was not gypsies; they was American whites, and under their sunburn and blowzyness real decent looking—the girl in particular, whose glorious hair blew about her face like wisps of sunshine and whose eyes seemed to be laughing at the rain.

But they were a queer-looking bunch—the first of the kind we had met, and I thought ain't that the absolute limit to let yourself get all untidy that way and wear bum clothes and not care how you look or wash the car or anything, and I didn't see how they could do it, and decided I would never let myself go like them—no, not on ten thousand trips!

Digitized by Google

Well, by that time the car was cool enough, and so we got in, very superior because it was a Colby-Droit, and slid down to Cumberland for luncheon.

Slid into was more nearly right, because the grades was by now not only slippery but far steeper, and some cheerful goof had painted little mottoes of encouragement on all the bad turns where there was a cliff or a big bowlder. "Prepare to meet thy God" was at the top as a general thing, and "Where will you spend eternity?" at the bottom. And, believe me, they was all too nearly appropriate to be comforting!

"Say, these must be mountains," I says at last. "They are too big to be hills."

"Part of the Alleghanies," says Westman, going into low and narrowly missing an oncoming truck. "The Cumberland Mountains."

"You know a lot about your country," I says. "More than I could of told."

"I read a lot when I first come over," he says.

"When you first came over?" I says. "Where from?"

"Russia," he says. "Didn't you know? I was ten years old before we come to this country."

"But the name of Westman?" I begun.

"We took it," he says. "Gee, but this clutch is slipping! I'll have to put some fuller's earth in at Cumberland. As I was saying, our real name is too hard to pronounce over here—Miscoijskojki—how's that?"

"It's fierce!" I says. "Are you a citizen, Tom?"

"First papers only," he says. "That's how I come to be in the Red Cross instead of going to France. I'm twenty-one last month."

Well, this give me quite a lot to think over—so much so that I hardly paid any attention to Cumberland City with its smart hotel and bright streets or to Jim's statement about the tires they make there. It was still on my

Digitized by Google

mind as we went shooting out of town over more and even higher mountains, back into Pennsylvania, where the lovely hillsides was all blacked by the smoke from coke burning and the trees poisoned and stark, and everything dying and blackened wherever the wind carried the fumes, and it wasn't until we descended into Uniontown that I got my poise again, what with piecing facts about Karl Westman and his doctrines together.

And I don't know that the whole country which we had gone through since lunch helped me any—a land of subterraneum dungeons, of fair hills with black holes in them, and men with blackened faces and little lamps on the front of their hats, of grim women fighting to make homes amidst the filtering soot. So this, I thought, is the coal country, where the miners live and we get sore at them when they strike. But look at where they live and what is around them all the time! Only a poet could keep the vision of the industrial prowess of the country—of the steel hearths and of the home fires, as things which must be kept burning,—before his eyes in this place.

I wanted to stop and get out and talk to these fellows. I wanted to tell them about those great wonderful factories back in Jersey that I had just seen only yesterday, and how they, the miners, was the men behind them, and that they must do their share in our big one-for-all-and-all-for-one job of making America. But I didn't dare. They scared me, they looked so powerful, so sullen and so—dirty! Besides, it was raining harder than ever. And also I was tired. It takes time to get used to these long rides. And then just when I got to the point where I felt I couldn't go even one step further, and we were still almost fifty miles from Wheeling, the car give a snort, snuggled down at the roadside and died. And just as she done so another car containing three men with guns drew up beside us and gave us a hail.

Digitized by Google

VI

IN the rapidly gathering twilight one of the men in the strange car leaned forward over the barrel of his gun —a fierce-looking bandit he was—and spoke to Jim. My heart nearly stopped.

"How far to Uniontown?" he says. "We been out hunting, and I guess we lost our way."

Well, can you imagine the relief of that? I'll say you can't! So we told them how far, and the mighty hunters went on their way, leaving me rejoicing that they were not revolutionists or something, because by that time I was tired enough to imagine any nonsense.

And then both the boys got out and commenced to look under the hood at what was the matter with the car, but couldn't find it, while tourists—happy tourists with nothing the matter with them or their autos—scooted by us in the dusk. Even the three side-car cycles from Jacksonville went by us, and the two boys from Connecticut, and these last yelled could they help, but we yelled no thank you, and so there we stayed, proud but stuck, and the rain getting heavier all the time. I begun to realize what a wicked woman I was ever to of left my home and baby, and then when the boys had pretty near give it up I looked at the speedometer and seen we had run over two hundred and fifty miles that day.

"Say, you wise birds," I called out, "when did you fill the tank last time?"

"Why, nonsense," says Jim instead of answering me, but speaking to his conscience instead—"why, nonsense! It was filled only this morning."

Digitized by Google

"But we don't generally run over two hundred miles since morning!" I wailed. "I bet we haven't got a drop of gas!"

But they didn't put up a cent on it, and a good thing, too, because that's just exactly what them two experienced motorists had let happen, and maybe I didn't rub it in about old Mr. Boyd having told me always to carry a five-gallon can—oh, no! And now didn't they wish they had listened to me in the first place, and so forth and ect. with true wifely helpfulness!

Well, they had no comeback to that, but Tom Bygoshski, or whatever his real name was, turned out to be a good sport and not ashamed to be ashamed—if you get me.

"Well," says he, "I'll go back with the next feller that passes to Uniontown for gas," he says, "and hop a ride back."

Well, he did that, and meanwhile I and Jim sat in the car in a silence which fell upon us as soon as we had called each other all the names we could think of, and it's the truth that by five o'clock each night all the way out we was generally not speaking, but at five A.M. next day we was so. Well, anyways, we sat there for what seemed like hours while Tom went away in a side car and finally come back with the juice in a five-gallon can and a charitable flivver. By that time I ached in every bone, both in my body and in my head, and my temper was badly bent. Why anybody ever wanted to do such a crazy thing as drive to California was more than I could see with a periscope, and I expressed my opinion pretty free—opinions being the only things which can be expressed free nowadays. But they put the five gallons in the tank and we slid along, hoping to pretty soon come to a town where a gas station was, but the further we drove the further off the town—any town—seemed to be. I actually got an idea it was moving away from us on purpose.

Digitized by Google

"The map says forty-five miles," says Jim, "but there must be something wrong—we must of gone fifty by now!"

"Forty, by the speedo," says Tom, cheerful as a duck in the rain.

"Well, I'll bet we been fifty just the same!" snaps Jim. "That speedometer is no good anyways!"

Well, we crept on and on, and still no town, and by now it was absolutely dark, and what with wondering had we taken the wrong turning and would the gas hold out, we were certainly having a pleasure trip—I'll say we were not!

"We'll have to keep on to Wheeling," says Jim, "because we got rooms engaged there. I'd a whole lot rather keep on and get in late to a good hotel than take a chance on a place we don't know about, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, I don't mind if the rest don't!" I says, trying to be a sport, but willing they should draw any conclusions they wanted from that remark. And then at last we see a town ahead! Such a beautiful town with lights and houses and everything! I admit that the next morning the buildings seemed to me to be not quite so lovely as I had at first thought, but coming into Washington, Penn., at nine-thirty and as yet no dinner—well, in my eyes the grandeur that was Rome had nothing on it!

Because we stayed. I'll say we did. When we had got gas our lights give out halfway across the railroad tracks, and with a sigh of relief we give up being good sports and decided the management at the Wheeling hotel would have to bear the disappointment the best way they could. I personally myself would of gladly slept in the car if permitted. But I didn't. I slept on the crease in a davenport sofa in a rooming house right over the nice choo-choo trains, because, believe me, it had rained not alone the gentle stuff from heaven as the poet says, but tourists from all over creation as well, who had the same

Digitized by Google

bright original idea of staying right where they was for the night instead of going on, on account of the wet, but had decided it several hours earlier than we did.

Just the same, I wasn't really sorry, but ate a T-bone steak at a hashery just like the old days on the Small Time when Jim and I was dancing for a bare living, and also it give me some interesting dope on where some of the new wealth in the country has come from. I found it out next morning when we paid three-fifty for the accommodations which in the old days would of been worth fifty cents a head.

"I make a pretty fair living," says the landlady, "since the tourists started coming through last year. My beds ain't been vacant more than a night a week since last April. I was pretty near at my wits' end before that. And now I don't need to worry. I certainly do appreciate the man who invented touring cars!"

And I'll say the old lady has sisters in every state! Which was the most important thing about that town excepting that the jars my and other cold cream comes in are made there. Ain't it remarkable the things this country produces?

Well, when we left there I was still looking for my hick town. Because in the ones I had seen so far there was the very same goggles for sale that I had got on Fifth Avenue, and drug stores which put the one where I had got my first-aid stuff to shame. But I, of course, realized we was still pretty far East and sort of unconsciously hoped for the worst.

Well, it was still drizzling rain when we started out at about the same time as not more than fifty other tourists, all apparently going the same way and most of them with banners and California or Bust or some such motto, and mostly in khaki and looking like a bunch of bums that enjoyed it, and I didn't see how they could let themselves

Digitized by Google

go that way, especially if women, because I had not got to feel that way as yet myself.

But the weather being so bad, I decided to put away my hat, which I did, and tied up my head in a veil, and the hat was never the same again, because Jim didn't notice when Welcome went to sleep on it in the tonneau.

"I told you we was starting too late in the year," Jim kept muttering all morning. "We'll hit the California desert just in the rainy season—you'll see! Good night!"

Well, I didn't come back at him, because we was on our way and what was the use? And besides that, the sun come out every once in a while and we would put the top down because we wanted to be hardy guys, and then it would commence raining again and we would put it back.

By this time I had come to realize that there was nothing peculiar about the fellow and sister tourists that I had at first taken for strange specimens. Every mile we went we met more of the same kind—cars hung with junk, crowded with everybody and their dog and most of 'em camping along the way and seeming to enjoy it. We had all of a sudden come upon them in bunches just as if when we left the shore road for the National we had turned out of a quiet street into a busy avenue and joined the California Pilgrims, which are a kind of modern Canterbury Pilgrims.

I seen a set of post cards of these Canterbury Pilgrims one time, and it seems Canterbury was in England, and going there had religion at the bottom of it, only you would hardly notice it, they had such a gay time, meeting up with each other and stopping at the same hotels or camps and exchanging the latest prohibition and flivver stories, and maybe getting to be such good friends that they slipped each other a little nip off the hip and told how they got stuck in the mud near London and how the landlord at Ye Boars Hedd Inn stuck you five berries for

Digitized by Google

a room without a bath, and how gas was sixty cents on the Oxford road and how they was obliged to travel all Saturday night on account of ye highwaymen, and so was two weeks without a bath and so forth and ect. But enjoying it all, including their troubles—after they was over, at least.

Well, such was the Canterbury Pilgrims, who was the fathers of the Pilgrim Fathers, I guess. But a few generations make a lot of difference, and we have grown a good ways beyond Plymouth Rock—I'll say we have! Several miles! And the California Pilgrims was again a friendly people. First thing I knew we was waving to some of the ones we had passed, or which had passed us yesterday, or been at the same restaurants or something, like they was old friends.

Just outside of Wheeling there was an awful stretch of wet clay road, and Tom was driving real well, but skidding because of being too proud to put on the chains, when we skedaddled backward a little and bumped someone that was trying to pass us, the fresh nut, and a regular chorus set up, and there was the Peterkins family fliv, which had thrown a loving front wheel around our hind one.

"Hey! Who's road do yer think this is?" says Pa Peterkin.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" says Jim. "Back up, can't you?"

"My engine is willing, but my wheels is sleek," says Pa with a grin. "Go on ahead yourself."

Well, by that time about twenty cars of every denomination had appeared from nowheres and started giving advice at the same time we started our engine. But we had to stop again and stop quick or we would all of been over the bank.

Digitized by Google

"This mud shimmies too fast," says Jim. "We got to get out and lift her over, that's all!"

And that is what they did—just got out and lifted the flivver out of the way—Pa Peterkin, Jim and principally Tom. Anyways, I think Tom principally did, because when he come back there was a marigold missing off the front of the oldest Peterkin daughter's dress and one growing in his buttonhole.

There was one big stiff in a golf suit and a new Colby-Droit—a newer one than ours—who had stood around most helpfully while the other boys was working, and when it was over seemed to think he had done it all. He spoke to me as he waded back to his bus sort of as if he and us was the only speaking-terms people in the bunch on account of our mutual car, if you get me.

"That's the way to do it, eh?" he says. "I could have told them to lift it in the first place."

And then the blockade was broken up and we all started off again.

"They are going to the coast too," says Tom as the Peterkins passed us. "He's a merchant on a much-needed vacation."

"Yes, I thought she was a mighty snappy doll myself," I came back at him.

Well, he didn't reply to that, but stepped on the bus and off we flew, leaving the calico sunbonnets of Maryland and Western Pennsylvania behind, and skimming over more wet mountains, all with them terrible religious signs on them, only now somebody had also painted "Boner for Coroner" on the bad curves as well, and finally come dashing into Wheeling. That kid sure drove fast!

"Go slow and see our city—go fast and see our jail, Tom," I says, and he slowed up.

I could control him a little, but not much, and he did quiet down enough to let us grab a few sandwiches to take

Digitized by Google

along from a pretty little hotel near a river, and then we crossed the river.

Having dashed through fifty miles of West Virginia—and I was glad, of course, to get this glimpse of the dear old South—we horned into Ohio and at last I felt we was really on our way West; only, also, as if I had been on it three weeks instead of three days.

Then Jim took the wheel, and naturally, he being my husband, I had no influence over him at all, and he drove so I thought we would be killed any minute.

"Aw, shut up or drive yourself!" he says finally, and of course I had no intention of driving down them terrible grades in wet weather, and so I shut up, except for begging him to go into low going down hill, which he wouldn't do because he never had to before, and shrieking at him to please stay next to the cliff and to blow the horn when we come to a curve; and, believe me, I mentally drove every inch of the road with him at sixty miles an hour from Zanesville to Columbus, especially when he nearly sideswiped a big Munson which darted around a curve and tried to bite us. And to this day I believe it was Jim's fault.

"Why, you let that kid drive anyway he wants to without letting out a yip!" says Jim peevishly after this escape. "And yet you pick on me unless I drive like I was going to a funeral."

"Going to a funeral will be right unless you go slow on these grades," I says, and then we was in low but out of speaking for a while.

And now, I thought, we are getting to the farm country, the beginning of the great agricultural belt where the hicks are, where the crops of corn and chin whiskers are to be found, and so I started in to look for them. I may as well add sooner or later that I am looking yet. I saw

Digitized by Google

the cultural part of agriculture—but hicks? Gone are the hicks! All gone! But there was lots of pigs.

I can't, since driving past Ohio, see why bacon is so dear. I'll bet that between Wheeling and Columbus I personally myself saw over one million pigs. Not in styes, but running around in ten-acre lots.

I never was so well acquainted with pigs before. I would not of thought that there was room in the entire U. S. A. for the number of pigs I seen in Ohio alone. Also we come by field after field of bright green stuff that they eat, and this was the first time I knew that alfalfa wasn't a college fraternity. There seemed to be no end to the fields of pigs and clover and farm-houses and cows! Oh, my mother, how many cows I seen!

Finally it commenced at last to dawn on me that this was a great country—a wonderful country where there was no horns on the cows, but where they grew their own barbed-wire fences out of a stuff called osage orange. God made this land and made it for farming. What is more, He divided it up awful even. Why, a mere hick from the city like myself couldn't help but notice how nearly of the one size them Ohio farms was—enormous compared to the East, but size and size alike; and the houses on them the same—good substantial houses set in shade trees and one no bigger than the other. I couldn't see, myself personally, how a soviet could divide them any better, and I wondered how Mr. Karl Westman intended going to work out here. I wondered if he had ever even seen the place and had any idea what he was up against, because where everybody has a good house and lot, what are you going to offer to make them give 'em up? And in the whole time I was traveling through this part of the country, meaning from Ohio to Kansas, it's the honest truth I didn't see but two farms that was for sale.

And here's another thing: We practically never seen a

Digitized by Google

farm without at least one car parked in the yard. I'll tell the world that from Zanesville on there begun to creep over me a kind of secondhand pride in these farms that I can't explain exactly, but which I felt all right, all right; and I begun to get a little realization of the fact that this is a mighty big country, a thing I have many times said at Liberty Bond drives without knowing what I was talking about, but now began to see for myself that it was so darn big that I would have to grow some to be equal to the responsibility of belonging to it in the right way. Say, here we had been traveling steady for days, and when I looked at the map I give a gasp, because I see that we wasn't even started!

Well, the farms I had been sort of prepared for, but the cities I was not. There are no towns west of the Alleghanies. They are all cities. And if they don't always have a city population to start with, why, they take no chance about what may happen in the future and start right in to have all the fixings, pavings, artistic street lights that would put your eye out—five lights to a post often; a bank, at least one hotel, and shops like Broadway!

At first I just simply didn't get it, and waited for the next one to be a jay village. But it didn't come along. I saw cootie coops and spit curls on the chickens which had come in off the farms in all four states, and heard the latest jazz on the drug-store records. "But wait," I says to myself, "this can't keep up. Pretty soon now we will hit the haystacks." But by night, when we hit the hay of a standardized mattress in a standardized hotel which might as well of been the Biltmore for all you could tell the difference in Columbus, Ohio, the simple little village had not yet walked onto the part of the map we was traveling across.

Anybody would expect Columbus to be a big city and a live one, but you don't realize until you go out there it

Digitized by Google

has kittens all over the state. And this went for the next day's travel, too, when we hiked along through farms and farms and pigs and Springfield, and then suddenly no Springfield, but just pigs and pigs and pigs and farms, and got diverted off the main route into Dayton by a flood.

The rain had by now all cleared out of the sky, but it hadn't left us by any means. It was right with us on the floor of Ohio and nobody who hasn't sloughed through it in an underslung car can appreciate the emotions you get by wading through Ohio. We had all unknowingly kissed paved highways good-by for a long time at dear old Christopher's home city, and most of the bridges ahead of us had heard we was coming and left before we got there. It seems it had been raining for a month in these here parts, and parts was all that was left for us to see, and only the parts that was floating at that. In our ignorance we thought it was real mud we was going through, but that was, as the map shows, before we got to Illinois.

Well, anyways, I didn't mind the detours much, because we seen the back country that way, whether we wanted to spare the time or not. But my good nature made no impression on Jim. Having nothing else to pick on me for, he tried to start something because of my not complaining.

"Say, you're a funny bird!" he says. "If I was to take you on five miles of road like this back home you would throw a fit, and here you stand fifty of it without letting out a yell!"

Well, what was the use explaining that there was no object in trying out back roads at home, whereas there was a big Purpose behind this trip, and every bit of road was a link in the chain, as the poet says? He wouldn't of understood my emotion, but only passed remarks on the pancakes I had eat for breakfast, which is his idea of what makes a person soulful.

Well, anyways, we went through the smiling city of Day-

Digitized by Google

ton, and aëroplane factories have a more uplifting effect on a city than other industries, and—no kidding intended—the town does look that way. It's a beauty! And pretty soon it was lunchtime, and we was in Richmond, Indiana, and I seen an Indian doll in a window, and so we got out and I sent the doll to Junior from the wild and woolly West, which wildness had so far consisted of smart little Main Streets full of snappy shops with plate-glass windows and at Richmond actually another hat like mine in the lace-trimmed milliner's window.

I don't know did anything on the whole trip impress me deeper than finding that ultra-smart model all along the line. It might not at first seem to be important; but when you look behind the hat and the fact that Jim could of bought his favorite collar or gloves in pretty near any town—I mean citylet—we went through you can begin, if you let your bean work, to get some notion of the breadth of our civilization. And seeing them little things impressed me more with our high standard of living than any amount of Board of Trade statistics.

Another thing which struck me a blow in the preconceived notions was the eats. All of a sudden it come to me how well we was eating, and—no kidding—we could seldom eat over half a dollar's worth. I don't mean because it was poor, but because it was cheap. In Richmond it occurred to me to check up the menu, and on my word the food ran from ten to fifty cents a portion, and this was no greasy vest, but a snappy little fumed-oak tea room, and tea rooms in the West is not the last resort of incompetent gentlewomen, but live business propositions and run by women who deliver the goods as well as the manners.

Listen! Fifteen cents for real he-bean soup in an art bowl! Twenty-five for roast chicken. It's the truth! And slowly I begun also to realize that we had been getting

Digitized by Google

steadily better and cheaper food ever since we crossed the Twenty-third Street ferry. Tom Westman was eating with us now, sort of as a matter of course, in the small places especially, and he couldn't get over the prices.

"Why, you couldn't eat on Second Avenue for that!" he says when he seen the check.

"Sure you couldn't!" I says. "And yet us New Yorkers like to speak of the crude Middle West! Say, what would your brother Karl think if he saw this menu, eh? He couldn't kick on the cost of the poor workingman's food out here, could he? Can he show me a Russian menu with prices like that on it—what? And remember, we are in the swellest joint in town!"

"Well, I'll say I'm surprised!" says Tom, looking over the menu interestedly. "And another thing I notice that is awful strange: The people out here talk friendly—notice? No chips around their shoulders."

"They don't need to hafto," says Jim. "The big majority stand on their own feet out here."

And that ain't very clear, but we knew what he meant, and so will any intelligent reader. And then we started off again, traveling all afternoon over what we in our still-Eastern inexperience thought was very bad roads, and through more model citylets, to Indianapolis, which might of been Bridgeport, only it was more so, where I at once fell into bed and into one of the joggling, rumbling, moving dreams which a person gets when they are too tired, and in which they sway with the car all night through rivers and over the backs of thousands of pigs and through millions of avenues of five-pointed arc lights in the latest art model.

And then all of a sudden I woke up, and there was Jim in his dressing gown, but all washed, his hair wet and brushed sleek the way I love it, and a cup of hot coffee, which I also loved, in his hand.

Digitized by Google

"I thought I'd let you catch up on your sleep," he says. "And here's your coffee and the morning paper. Take your time with them while I do the packing."

And I did, and these are the little tender things which keeps a man and wife together and one of them on Jim's part will last me for weeks.

Well, anyways, I drank the coffee and opened the paper —the first I had seen except little local sheets since we had left New York. And when I done so I let out a holler that brought Jim hopping to my side.

"What is it—scald yourself?" he says.

"I don't know but maybe I have!" I says. "Look at that!" and this is what we read:

BROADWAY BOMB EXPLOSION
NOW LAID TO REDS
NEW YORK POLICE LOOKING
FOR RADICAL LEADERS

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

VII

OUTSIDE the window the Indianapolis street cars roared and jolted past with protesting shrieks, and the hoarse, confused murmur that belongs to big cities could be plainly heard in the silence which fell between I and Jim as we looked at that terrible piece of news from home. "Read it!" says Jim. "I'll bet your highbrow friends of the Intelligencia gang are back of it!"

Well, I let that pass, because I wasn't so sure but that they was. And so all I done was read, and this was what the piece says: It seems that on the very day that Tom Westman kidnapped me—just two hours earlier, in fact—a terrible explosion had happened on lower Broadway, killing ten people. At first it had been supposed that a wagon with dynamite for blasting had been accidentally hit, but now the cops thought it was the Reds, and not only the Reds, but that the whole thing had been guided by a master mind. Of course, I at once thought of Karl Westman. Anyways, he had disappeared the day before we left—I knew that—and although no names were mentioned by the paper, he flashed into my mind right off. And here in the confusion of getting away from home we had not even heard of the explosion. Ain't that New York for you though?

Somehow the whole thing, terrible as it was, seemed awfully dim and unreal to me; even that night at dinner in the Mocking Turtle, with Karl's ugly purple face gleaming through the haze of smoke while his thick lips shouted that the capitalist ought to be blown to hell—that it was the only way to teach them. It all seemed like a queer,

Digitized by Google

unhealthy dream to me, it was so far away from the clean, fine country we had been riding through day after day; the calm country with its rich wide fields, its busy, clean-cut people, its bright prosperous young cities. In reading that paper I felt like I was looking at New York, and especially at radical New York, through the wrong end of the telescope, and it appeared like a small glowing coal at the far end of a long, cool, green valley. It seemed like the beginning of time since I had been back there listening with a real disturbed heart and mind to those queer people, shut up in their smoky café and talking, talking, talking about a revolution in a country they had never even seen; that since then I had been traveling for years through a land of peace and plenty. I felt so safe, so secure up to now that I had pretty near forgotten what I had come for—to spread Americanism—and all at once I realized that what I had actually been doing was absorbing that very thing myself. It had come into me naturally out of the very air I'd been breathing. And if I had read that newspaper in any place but the first big industrial city we had hit I don't believe I would of paid half the attention to it that I did.

"Damn those crooks!" says Jim. "We ought to deport the whole crew—these fellers that love revolution so. Why don't they go back to their native Russia, or wherever they come from, where they can have a fight every morning before breakfast if they want it? I'm fed up with this straddling—one foot in America and the other foot back home!"

"And it isn't as if they was all direct from the other side either," I says, glad for once to agree with my husband. "The ones which get my goat are the second and third generation ones who still love the old country so that they are willing to do everything for it except go live there."

Digitized by Google

"You said a *hors d'over!*" says Jim, lacing his older boots briskly because of having decided they was good enough for the car. "You said a pickled herring—it'll keep! But what I wonder is, did them highbrow members of the Intelligencia gang have anything to do with this business, eh? First thing you know, Tom'll be running us off a cliff and wrecking the car just to show us where we capitalists get off."

"That very thing oozed through my own bean," I says, putting on the same waist as yesterday because the laundry was commencing to pile up something terrible, and as we had forgot a laundry bag, what to do with our dirty linen unless we washed it in public was getting to be one of the most important things in life. Well, anyways——

"I did think of it, but I canned the thought," I says, "because I'm not going to frisk myself of a perfectly good chauffeur until I got some reason I can put my teeth into," I says.

And Jim agreed with me, but just the same when Tom come up and knocked on the door, not expecting anything worse than the usual morning bags and ecteras, we give him the paper to read and watched him like a pair of cats while he done so. A drawn look come into his face which had up to now been growing younger every day, making him look still young, but faded, the way he had been that first night when we talked about bombs across the dirty dishes.

"I've seen it!" he says very quietly. "It seems like a nightmare, don't it?"

Well, what could a person say to that except you bet or something? So that was all we did say, and as soon as possible set off West again, glad to leave Indianapolis, for all its noisy prosperity, because in the great manufacturing towns somehow a person could feel the disturbing, clutch-

Digitized by Google

ing unrestful hands of the East, and—oh, well, what's the use trying to explain it? I don't know what is the matter with industry, but I do know that industry is one of the things that is the matter with the country. And that the farther West you go the less industry—in a factory sense—you see and the more sane you feel.

At any rate, when we started the sun was shining in a blue sky that looked as if it had come to stay, and it was real warm—over seventy even then—so I took off my coat and wore only a duster, because after all it didn't matter in the car, and also took off my hat to let the sweet moist air blow my troubles out of my brain, and so it did after a few miles.

There is something so kind of big and endless about driving across America that it gives a person a sense of having been cut loose from time and place; it rests you the way nothing else can. You are a kind of atom or something, traveling free from the maddening bill collector and under no obligation to get anywheres on time, because how could you promise faithfully about a car? No mail can reach you up to a certain point, and if the cook at home leaves or the house burns down or the ice don't come or they raise your taxes you should fret. You don't even know about it, and if you don't like one place you can easy move on to another. You are the freest you are ever likely to be, and if you add trouble to the other baggage in the car you got nobody to blame but your own self, and anybody which don't leave old dog Trouble Ever Faithful checked at the home station don't deserve to make the trip. Just remember what the Hints to Tourists on the back of the map says—"Load your car light!"

Well, anyways, I did feel happy this morning in spite of the thermometer going up and up in company with the moisture out of the ground. Because, believe me, the

Digitized by Google

Ohio flood, which we had thought fairly wet, was only damp compared to Illinois, and anybody which has crossed that state after a seven weeks' rain will understand me perfectly. And also it was this morning that I learned a brand-new truth about garage men, which is to say they had a brand of wickedness up their sleeve which I had not suspected before, and I'll say I had suspected quite a few and actually known of even more; and this new vice was giving directions to innocent strangers about pet short cuts of their own. Tom sprung one as we was putting Indianapolis behind us.

"The feller at the garage was telling me," he says, "that the national road is in bad shape from here on, and to go north by Montezuma and keep on the Ocean-to-Ocean trail as far as Springfield."

"All right!" says Jim, and off we started, thinking how kind and helpful these garage men are. And kind he was, because pretty soon we found out that this knowing piece of information was perfectly correct, because there was a big sign across the road which says the National was closed to all except swimmers and no boat traffic allowed, and so we steered north, taking the gentle hint of a detour sign in letters not over two feet tall, and pretty soon we was riding along one of the backest back roads I ever hope to see, with corn ten feet tall growing like a forest on the both sides of us in cute little fifty-acre fields. I expect this was what they call intensive cultivation—it certainly was intensely large. And there not being anything else to look at, why, of course, we took in every little thing about it, from how big the ears was to how black the earth was—like chocolate frosting it looked. That's another remarkable thing about this trip—it forces you to notice a whole lot of things you would never notice any other way. Imagine me noticing fields of corn, for a sample!

Digitized by Google

But out in this part of the country you just got to notice 'em, because they are every place you look.

Well, after a while we come to a little group of houses which was Montezuma, and there ahead of us in deep discussion with the boys who was holding down the post-office steps who would we see but the new gray Colby-Droit, the one which had been so proud back in West Virginia on the wet clay. When he saw us he started to speak like we had just left off talking the minute before. My but that guy hated himself!

"The road ahead is impassable!" he says. "Three cars tried to get through to Springfield yesterday and had to turn back. You'd better go down to Terre Haute and take the main line. That's what I'm going to do. Our cars will get through all right, I know. I've had a lot of experience motoring."

Well, believe me, having one state road closed because of mud and repairs and the other one closed because of mud and no repairs gives you a kind of feeling like the camera man had turned sixty feet without opening the shutter—in other words, perfectly blank. But if a person is stopped by little things or big things either they might better stay at home and make their thirty-five hundred miles register riding round and round Central Park instead of driving from coast to coast.

"We got to get to St. Louis to-night, that's all!" says Jim. "If we turn back we may be stuck a week. But I got no intention of going over a road that's marked 'Closed,'" and he looked off after the other Colby, which was by now heading back the way it had come, lickety-split, or as lickety-split as the road would allow of.

"There ought to be some other way," says Tom. "Let's ask the natives."

And with that he hopped out and was met halfway by a nice old bird in blue jeans and a black felt hat, while

Digitized by Google

we sat in the car at ninety in the shade, only we was in the sun, and pretty soon back come Tom with a few notes on the back of a envelope.

"He says he'd go back if he was us," he announced. "Because his wife's cousin's been trying to get through for a week, and he's boarding free with them yet. But I got the dope on a middle road, and I'm game if the rest are."

"We got to be," says Jim. "The hellovit is we haven't time to lay off until the world dries up. We got to get through, that's all."

"Sure we have!" I says. "Put on the chains and go!"

"We don't need chains!" says Tom scornfully. "They don't do no good. "Why, I've drove all over New York without chains!"

"Well, I wish you'd put 'em on just the same," I says. "The book says put them on."

And with that off we started, innocent and gay, glad of the blue sky, the beautiful friendly fields and the country, which at last was beginning to look a little different from home; and if we had a picture of muddy roads ahead, why, we supposed of course they would be only pretty bad —like, say, the Boston Post Road detours—that was fully capable of splashing up the car enough to make a wash necessary in St. Louis, but not so bad as the Ohio flooded ones, because nobody round here had said anything about that Noah stuff, even though it had been raining for days. But ye gobs and little fishes! We was to learn the real truth about why a car is called a boat! It was nicknamed so by an Illinoisan, I'll gamble, and nicked is right, because beneath the underdone mud are holes—large but unseen—and nicked is what your boat pretty soon is. I personally myself can testify that after the seventieth wallop in the sixty miles through Terre Haute to Paris our tire bracket had a nervous breakdown and the tires had

Digitized by Google

to be sustained with the tow rope that Jim had given me the merry laugh for bringing. And when they was all bound round with that hangman's handy tool we looked about as much toured against as touring.

But there was one comfort in the bus being covered with mud and rope, and the dog having put mud all over the bags with his dirty paws—we could let down a little more about our personal appearance, and I even went so far as to borrow a cap off of Jim, because a person has to shade their eyes, no matter how it looks; and anyhow, I didn't know anybody in Paris, Illinois. Besides, comfort is something you simply got to have on a trip like this.

Well, anyways, I was glad to see Paris, Illinois, because of all I have read about it, and also because of a girl I know in the dressmaking business who calls herself Estelle Modes, Paris, and she comes from this town, but allows the public to infer anything they like. And it's a good town, and I personally myself would just as soon admit the Illinois part of it after I once seen it, even if you do come into it out of absolutely nowhere and go right back into the void ten minutes after leaving. It was the most surprising citylet we had come on so far, because while it was as perfect as any—courthouse, traffic cops, street lighting all complete, and a ladies' dressing room in the big garage that, no kidding, beat the Ritz for space, cleanliness and little comforts—well, while this was true, we come on it out of a wilder wilderness than any we had been through before, and in all these places I and Jim both passed the remark many times how strange it is they have absolutely no suburbs—no scattered house lying around on the outside of the town and getting thicker as you get nearer, but you plunge all at once without any warning into the heart of the Metropolis, as the newspapers say. And this true fact never ceased to get a rise out of us all the way from Ohio clear through Kansas. The citylets of the Middle

Digitized by Google

West are in a unique class by theirself, and the more of them I see the more I wondered what ever started that N. Y. idea that they was jay.

Well, anyways, when we had admired Paris and admired in particular a fifty-cent dinner we had there of only soup, fat broiled chicken and candied sweet potatoes, two vegetables, ice cream, coffee and pie, we dashed down to the abrupt ending of Main Street, taking the road which the garage man, which it's a fact he was stronger on plumbing than directions, had told us to take, with the pleasing result that presently we was completely lost. We tried to turn round and go back to Paris and was shortly even more lost, and the only signs on any corner was Chew Cub Plug and Whatsis, or some place we never heard of before, fourteen miles.

And what is further, we never struck a farmhouse on any corner. They seemed to build them in the middle of the block, if you get that, so's to be as far away from each other as possible, when wouldn't you think they would make it on the four corners so they could at least fight with each other, and for the further convenience of tourists? But they don't—not out West—and I would think they'd die of a lonesomeness that could easily be avoided, especially as lots of that land is taken up in quarter sections, which means the four corners often do come together.

Well, anyways, we was lost all right, and so I says the next farmhouse we come to we will stop and ask, and we went on—and on—and still yet again on. Somebody had to live some place pretty soon, we knew that, because somebody must of planted all that corn we were going by unless it really grew wild. And meanwhile we were doing our daily stunt of desperately trying to beat the sunset to our hotel, but with St. Louis still the other side of Jordan.

"Say, do you realize we are not only sluing from side to side up to our hubs in goulash," I says at length, "but

Digitized by Google

that we are only making fifteen miles an hour at that?"

"I was thinking," says Westman, who was wrestling with the wheel, which tugged him about like it was alive and mad at him and trying to pull his arms out by the roots—"I was thinking," he says, "of the pioneers who come through the mud out here on ox carts," he says, "and how there must of been times when they didn't make over fifteen miles a day."

He said this so serious that I shut up and only looked at him with sort of new eyes. It was strange to have this kid—foreign born—think of that before I, a born American, did. But I passed no comments on it, feeling it better to let the country do its own propaganda without any interference from me in this case, and then pretty soon we actually come in sight of a farm, and as there didn't seem to be nobody round but one lone woman, I says I would get out and ask. And so I threw my main supports over the door, and following them went up and said hello, would she tell me the road to St. Louis. It sounds like a simple question, but you don't know the half of it, or what I had started.

This lady was a good substantial one. She sort of reminded me of ma, a white American woman in a clean gingham and starved for a gabfest like a suburban wife for a matinée, only a hundred per cent worse. There was a talk-hungry look in her faded eyes, and the way she stalled to keep me almost made me cry. She took in my clothes one by one, and I could see she was disappointed they wasn't better.

"Where you from?" she says first of all. "New York? My heaven, all the way in that car? Where you going ter? What? California? You don't say! There was a lady and gentleman through here last month, but they was only going far as Kansas. I got a cousin in Kansas—near Cottonwood Falls. Ever been there? No, not yet, of

Digitized by Google

course! Well, you was asking about St. Louis. Well, you might take your right—no, your left—down to Shelbyville and go crost to Vandalia. I know a man works down to Vandalia—and he says it's on the main road to St. Louis."

"Then we better take that," I says, starting to go. "Thank you a lot."

"Well, I don't believe I'd take it this time o' year," says the lady. "I hear there's a bridge gone down that way. Better keep on through Hillsboro and Staunton. How far did you say you was going?"

"California," I says again.

"Wisht I could go!" says she. "I never get to go no place. They always got some other use for the flivver. Sometimes I feel like if I ever once got off this farm I wouldn't never come back to it outside of a coffin!"

"Why, what's wrong with it?" I says.

"Lonesome!" says the woman, her lips shutting into a thin line. "And besides, I ain't needed here."

"Not needed?" I says. "Why, who would do the housework?"

"Oh, a camp cook can always do that!" she says bitterly. "Women ain't actually needed on a farm. The menfolk could get along just as good without us. Now in the cities, that's different. I often think of being a saleslady or clerk or a cook, even. But I'm too old to commence again. Lots have, though. Three out of every four families hereabouts has moved to the cities these last ten years."

"Say," I says, "you are quite a thinker! What makes 'em go? I would think a swell farm had it all over the city unless you are real rich."

"Think?" says the woman. "Of course, I think! I got nothing else to do except when I'm working, and you don't have to keep your mind on my kind of work, so I think then too. And I'll tell you, young woman, no modern,

Digitized by Google

up-to-date girl will stay on a farm if she can get offen it—and no wonder! She'd rather marry a soda clerk in a town than a fine young feller that owns his one hundred and sixty acres of good farm land. And I don't blame her, nuther!"

"I'll say that's real radical!" I says. "You talk like you wanted a soviet!"

"What's a soviet?" says the woman suspiciously. "If it's one of them newfangled reaper machines or a motor plow I don't want even the name of it! Everything on this farm has been for the farm—see?—and I'm sick of it! Every penny that goes for improvements goes for farm improvements, and not a nickel for me—not a dollar for the farmhouses or us farm women. And let me tell you, young lady, the farmhouse is the heart of the farming business, and until the farmers their own selves understand this the young girls will refuse to tie theirselves up in marriage to farmers. Until they get improvements—electric washers, lights, decent houses they can take some pride in, and then get some freedom from drudging about with old-fashioned inconveniences—they are going to prefer city boys. I know what I'm talkin' about. I got two daughters married in the city, and a son gone and left us too!"

"Gee, that's rough!" I says, real interested by now.

"Farm labor?" says the woman. "Who wants to be a farm worker in the kind of homes we got—far off, no picture shows, nothing but work? Why, there's no law in this country against children working on farms, and a mother hates to see her kids done up with chores—yet the father always wants 'em to! Women hate farms! I hate this one! I'll tell you, young woman, the farm-labor problem is going right on the way it is until the farm women get something better in the way of living than they got now. For every tractor, a equal new household equipment—

Digitized by Google

that's my motto! My land, but don't I wisht I was going along with you folks!"

Jim was by this time honking badly, so I had to go.

"Maybe you'll get away soon," I says, shaking hands with her, and she give an awful funny answer.

"I wisht he'd buy a phonographt!" she says.

But I understood. And when I had given Jim the direction and got back in the car again I kept looking back at her and waving as long as I could and wishing I had thought to ask her name so's I could send her a picture postal. And the last we seen of her I think she was still talking, and so was Jim about how it was getting dark and all my fault for delaying the game like that, and meanwhile we was going on and on without meeting a town anywheres.

I begun to think all the towns had been drowned in the mud, and the old familiar ache of utter tiredness was creeping over me, and we all had the usual evening edge, not meaning in any liquid sense, because liquor and us had been strangers since the start of the trip, and nobody in the places we had been seemed either to have any bootlegs or to want any—well, anyways, I mean edge to our tempers, and the daylight had no consideration for us, but just went on giving out regardless and finally went altogether, leaving us soshing and struggling along over a road which was ruts and mud and mud and ruts and washouts on either hand lots of times when we would come to a hill. The only way to drive at all was to keep in the shallowest of the ruts and pray to heaven. And then, with Jim driving, we went over a little bridge, shot up a incline, skidded to one side and stopped dead, our differential snuggled down deep into the lovely Illinois blue gumbo.

"I guess we're stuck!" I remarked as if I needed to call

Digitized by Google

their attention to it. "And in all this wet! Say, Jim, didn't all this part of the world used to be an ocean?"

"What d'yer mean, used to be?" growled Jim savagely, climbing into not over two feet of earth that hadn't jelled. "Get at that wheel and spin her around Tom, while I cut some brush."

Well, Tom spun her, and around went the wheels all right. They could easily, because the car was resting on the pan, which left the wheels entirely free—there was no bottom to the ruts. I though about chains and how somebody or another—meaning me—had several times suggested putting them on when the car got up and dressed in the morning. I say I thought it, but I kept my thoughts to myself. I had no wish to be murdered by two strong, angry men on a dark and lonesome back road, and I was taking no chances. So I merely switched on the dash light, put the three cushions on the floor, and realizing that this was the first evening since we started out that I'd had a chance to read, or hadn't been so sleepy I couldn't, got out Shakspere.

"What are you doing?" says Jim when he saw me. "Reading—when we got all this work to do?"

"Well, you say there's nothing I can do to help," I says, looking up at him over the top of Romeo from my harem seat.

"Well, you might at least stand around and watch!" he says.

"I can see very good from here," I says.

And then he went off awful mad, to look for brush that wasn't there. Literally there wasn't any—not a handful except of briars, nor a fence they could pull down nor anything, and they had to go looking for it with the pocket flash at that. Finally Jim come back from the bridge behind us with one loose board he had caught, and threw it behind the left hind foot of our churchyard rabbit,

Digitized by Google

giving meanwhile a exhibition of some of the language he had learned in the pictures—pure Studioese of the strongest kind. And when the stick proved a mere nothing he and Tom got out all them things they had kidded me so for buying—the shovel, the ax, the puller and so forth—and commenced to play with them. And while they done so for two hours I read the script of Romeo and Juliet and had a real good time, once in a while stopping to hand them a plier or something, and showing almost superhuman self-control in never once saying "I told you we would need them," and a good thing, too, because the puller broke on the first pull; but that was before we found out that the wheels was going around merely in space and no purchase nearer than China.

"Better walk back to the nearest farmhouse and get someone to come pull us out," says Jim at length when they had for over an hour mined with the ax and pick and shovel and ectera all around the bus, but only got her in a little deeper by doing it. "I hate to do it," he says, "because I've heard these Illinois farmers is a bunch of hold-up men when it comes to pulling a car out, but I don't know how we can help it."

"Well," says I, "don't give 'em a nickel over twenty-five dollars," I says.

"I won't!" says Jim. "They better not try to rob me! But we can't stay here all night."

"I'll go back," says Tom. "I saw a place about two miles down the road."

Jim went through the motions of protesting, but Tom wouldn't listen even.

"I don't mind a bit!" says he, lying cheerfully. "And I'll bring help if I have to use a gun!"

He grinned at us, struggling into his sweater under the headlights, and with a wave of his hand vanished into the darkness, leaving I and Jim to wait without speaking for

Digitized by Google

a time that seemed longer than the whole rest of my life put together. And then, just as we had about decided he had been drowned in the mud or maybe murdered in the lonely farmhouse, we heard a car and his voice calling, "There she is—right beyond the bridge!"

Now I've heard a lot of good music in my time—we got a two-hundred-dollar phonograph, for one thing—and I've had the best orchestras always when doing my society dances in the old vaudeville days, and once Al give me two seats to hear Caruso in person and I didn't want to waste them. But never—no, never on my word of fair-to-middling honor have I heard any music as sweet and beautiful as the engine of that car, excepting maybe that of our own car when it got pulled out and was running.

As for the two he-farmers who had come out at nearly ten P. M. in their Sunday clothes, they were without doubt two of the handsomest men I ever seen, and real Americans, too, of the first water and no German accent or anything, or mean like you read about keeping mudholes as a source of income. Why, from their talk you would of thought it was a pleasure to help us, and the most remarkable part yet—they wouldn't take a cent! Not a cent! Not even one of Jim's cigars, though I don't know that I blame them for that, he having kept his small-time-salary taste in tobacco. But anyways they wouldn't hear of money.

"When somebody else is in trouble you'll help them," says the biggest, handsomest farmer. "That's the way to pay such things."

And then we shook hands all around and gathered up the mining outfit and chased the dog, which of course took that minute to run off, and finally got in and was on our way.

Oh, the heavenly relief of it! Believe me, if you want the most exquisite sensation of pleasure, go get stuck in

Digitized by Google

the Illinois gumbo for two hours and then get out of it. I'll tell the world that never—no, not even when I got my first good press notices did I have a sensation like the one I had when that bus give a lurch, come clean out of the bog and stood purring and ready to go on her way. The joy of feeling her move is something no poet can tell about and get away with. It's one of them things which has got to be experienced to be understood.

"Follow the heavy electric cables when you come to them," says one of the Angel Farmers, "right into Hillsboro. Good luck!"

And then we was actually off, driving for miles and miles, Jim at the wheel and trying to make time in spite of I begging him to be careful. But he was nervous and tired, and the more I asked him to be careful the more he wouldn't, but took corners in a simply crazy way, and when I thought the road must be washed out in the darkness on either side my hair stood on end, or would of only for my cap.

"Jim, you nut," I says, "have a heart! Let Tom drive, please! Oh, Jim, you make me so nervous!"

"Shut up! I won't!" says Jim. "I know how to drive this bus! I've drove it all over New York City!"

"But this ain't New York!" I wailed but to no avail.

And then what I had been expecting but yet not really expecting, if you get me, happened. We dashed down a grade where a rickety little bridge showed fantastically ahead in the spotlight, slued violently to the right in the treacherous mud, missed the bridge and went over the bank. For one awful moment I thought "I'm going to die! Oh, Jim, I told you so!" and then my head hit something with a noise like a battlefield, everything went black and I knew no more.

Digitized by Google

VIII

WHEN I come to I imagined that the whole entire world including its excess baggage, had fallen on top of me, with apparently no intention of getting off. I thought my head was ruined and my legs was all broke and that my screen value was gone forever. Also that it was really unnecessary for Jim to put his foot in my face, but that's a husband for you—no consideration in little things!

However, I after a moment realized it was not Jim's foot, but the heel of a suitcase from the back of the tonneau, and that Jim was under me and pinned down tight.

I couldn't believe it had happened, or if it had that it must be on a location and pretty soon the whistle would blow, but it didn't; and instead came not the director's voice but that of young Westman, who had been flung clear of the car and was already on his feet and busy at something or other, I couldn't tell what. To hear the two voices of he and Jim you would of thought they was continuing a calm gabfest that had been going on in a private smoking den or something for maybe a hour or two.

"I think I'm only caught," Jim was saying. "Will she hold if I move?"

"The top saved her from going completely over," says Tom's voice, "and there's a fence holding below. I'll have her up in a minute. Wait till I lift her off you."

And this time it was me he meant by "her," and somehow or another he got me out, first removing a couple of bags off my face, and then the golf clubs, and then by sheer strength pulled me through the wind shield, and would of helped me to sit down, but I found a young tree and held onto it.

Digitized by Google

"Jim!" I says. "Get Jim!"

Well, I don't like to dwell on the rest of it too much. Because, believe me, I dwelt one thousand years in twenty minutes at the time, and that is enough. But I do want to go on record with a few things about Tom Westman, and what he did was according to him nothing at all, but the true facts are that Jim was caught with one foot under the car and only held about an inch from being crushed by a combination of lunch box and twisted left fender; and that Tom somehow found a plank where there wasn't any and jacked that bus up all alone so's Jim could pull out his leg unharmed and get free also through the wind shield, and that the car lay such a way that only for Tom's being on the job so quick and not losing his head Jim would of at least had one less leg to-day.

Well, anyways, after Jim was out and my heart had commenced to beat again and my head begun to figure out that the trip was ruined and we would have to go on by train, provided we could ever get to some place where trains passed, and that now Jim was alive and safe and nothing broken but his sense of humor, why, then of course I also begun to realize it had all been his fault and his deliberate carelessness, and even the fact that I would from now on always have something to throw up to him for which he would have no comeback failed to comfort me.

And here was where Tom, who seemed to have the strength and cheerfulness of a team of oxen, showed us different. For he and Jim got the puller and hitched it to a tree and this time it did pull, and pretty soon—lifted mostly by sheer strength of language, I guess, only of course under the circumstances I pretended not to hear it—that car stood upright on the road, uninjured except for a broken wind shield, cracked radiator shell and crumpled left mud guard. And I was so happy over it that I never passed a single remark about how they had

Digitized by Google

laughed at me for bringing it when they took the two gallons of extra oil and put it into the of course empty crank case; and when Tom got in and stepped on her and after a heart-cracking sigh of hesitation the engine actually turned over I wanted to pray in thankfulness.

You know the way a person first naturally makes a lot of rash enthusiastic promises in the gratitude of the moment, and, believe me, Tom would of got his if he would of let us, which he would not, and somehow made us shush, as he put it, we hardly knew how. He was a better gentleman than either of us, I'll say that; but just the same Jim and I kept reservations in our mind about what we would do for him in increase of wages and a car of his own when he least expected it, and I personally myself decided to surprise him at Christmas with a diamond-mounted watch, and was determined not to cool down to a post card with greetings by the time the holiday season actually come around, as is often the case.

"I'll never forget what you done for us," says Jim as we come at length limping into the next town, the most beautiful town I ever saw that night in my life, if you get me! "I'll never forget it," says Jim. "And I'll prove it if ever I get the chance to do something for you!"

"Oh, shush!" says Tom.

Now far be it from me to say anything against this town or any other part of Illinois or its people, except of course their so-called roads, and why be in a hurry to criticize even them, because maybe nobody ever called the natives' attention to the condition of their roads, and perhaps if they read this they will notice the roads the next time they are trying to go some place, and then maybe the roads will be improved and become as the poet says, worthy of the towns they run up to and the farms they lead to; and when this is accomplished, why it will be easier to keep help that has seen Paree, because the help

Digitized by Google

will not be so constantly reminded of the battlefield mud, which they have also seen, remember! Also social calls between farm ladies will be easier, and the heart of the farm problem, which, like pretty near any other national problem, it seems, lies in the home, will be a little solved by making the great farms more accessible, and farmers are social human beings like anybody else, or would be if possible; and it's a shame that hell is paved with good intentions when the apparent lack of even the intentions is making hell out of such a lot of good farm country.

I don't know how a person does it, even after having done it myself, but once you get your mind made up to drive from coast to coast you get a kind of extra strength that comes partially, I guess, from your mental workings and the utter freedom from all ties. But however the scientific facts are, I know that a person can and does fall into bed at night with every bone and muscle aching like you had the flu or something, to say nothing of the ache in your temper and the pain in the small of your disposition. And yet you wake up next morning before the roosters do, all full of pep, and would have to look in your notebook to remember how you felt last night. A kind of urge to get along—to be on your way—gets to you, and by the time you are in the Middle West the Far West starts calling like mad, even if you ain't ever seen it before. It's like getting religion or something. It's like hearing the voice of somebody you love, faint and clear and insistent in your brain. You actually get homesick for the West that is in your brain, and you feel you got to hurry toward it or be sick. I don't know why this is true, but it is. You are like the little girl in the fairy story where the magic lady kept leading her from field to field where each new place had bigger and brighter flowers than the one before, until she was a very long, long ways from home and glad of it. Can you get that at all? It's magic, all right, that's

Digitized by Google

what—and the thrill begins with the very word "West." The farther you go the bigger the flowers are in the next field just beyond, and—I know this sounds sort of silly—you get greedy for beauty and more of it.

And those fields of flowers are not all flowers of speech on my part either. Because after a day of repairs at the town, during which time our dramatic night of horrors and heroic rescues come down to earth as a plain hellova nuisance and delay—well, after that day we plunged down into fields of golden flowers all right; acre after acre of clear yellow blossoms that would put your eye out, and each field more lovely than the next, although I expect a mere weed to the farmers.

Down, down we plunged out of the hilly country—and "plunged" is right—through lakes that had once been roads, with the blue sky reflected in them and the curses of the tourists drowned in them, and all the while the fields growing flatter and more golden; but I did sure wonder where the tourists who was camping done so; perhaps they carry rafts as well as tents while passing through this country, which, I must add, grows wonderful watermelons—and why not?

At last the map showed we was on the Mississippi bottoms, and I showed off a little of my education to Jim, which it was about time I done so, because he, having seen the West by train, was forever pointing out things we was coming to but never did.

"Say, this Mississippi River is what made Mark Twain and Frances White famous, ain't it?" I says—"besides several other great song writers?"

"I don't know," says Jim. "But I know St. Louis is the place so many head waiters was named for."

Well, the comedian having pulled the cue, I sat back and waited for the black-faced chorus in red-and-white stage calico to cross our path with a patter dance and a few

Digitized by Google

jazzy stanzas about down the Mississippi where we all go dippy underneath the ragtime moon, and waiting for maybe even the lighting to change and the silvery moon to come up at 4.30 P. M., I having the thorough N. Y. conception of the daily life of the Mississippi Valley so realistically put before me for years by Broadway managers.

And it's the truth, the average New Yorker—and remember there are over six million of them, or anyways five million six hundred thousand, and the rest of them are a little above the average, including ourselves—well, as I was saying, it's the truth, their whole idea of America is what some smart young stage manager who has never been west of Hoboken has put before them on the stage, and shouted himself hoarse for the girls to put a little pep into it. And even I personally myself used to be half convinced that Indians was mostly blond chickens with feathers on their heads and very little else except the jewels their rich uncle had give them, and that cowboys walked with their hands on their hips and always as a background to a tenor. Do you get me? And New York is perfectly satisfied with its ignorance.

Well, all I got to say is that I learned—and that it is time the East Coast woke up to the fact that, Shakspere to the contrary notwithstanding, where ignorance may be bliss you are a darn fool not to get wise, and coming into St. Louis and finding it and surrounding country no nonsensical bunch of coon jazz, banjos and cheap sentiment, but a wonderful, rich, hardworking, nonradical unit of the U. S. A. put me in mind of a waiter I once met, and this is a true story, and he was one of them Louies from St. Louis, too, only they call it "Lewis" out there.

Well, anyways, this horrible example of what the West thinks of N. Y. come back to me at this time and I understand it now, though I didn't at the time it happened in a Sixth Ave. restaurant where I and Jim had gone to get our

Digitized by Google

supper after the show we was playing at the Colossal, where we was appearing for ten minutes and a thousand dollars in person this week only.

Well, this waiter was a stranger to us, and Jim says, "Where is Joe who used to be at this table?" And the waiter says, "When?" And Jim says, "Oh, about two years ago." And the waiter says, "Oh, I wasn't here then! I was in America." Well, we took notice of that, because this was Sixth Avenue.

"Well," says Jim, "where was that?"

"West of the Mississippi River," says the waiter with a snort, and walks away.

Well, I personally would say he was too rough on Ill., Ind. and Ohio and ect., but it's a fact the Eastern States are getting a whole lot too foreign for their health, and undoubtedly that waiter was only talking about as much of the country as he had actually seen. He had also said when we questioned him, "What's the use in me trying to tell you about this country—buy a ticket, that's all—just go buy a ticket!" And it wasn't until I started traveling that I got him right at all. New York is the spoiled Rich Man's daughter. She's a beauty, and she has got everything in the world she wants, including foreign company with fancy names and highbrow ideas. But she sometimes forgets it's Poppa and Momma who gives her most of what she's got, and that their name is Mr. and Mrs. West. I hope they won't let her marry a foreign title—particularly not a Russian one. That waiter had the dope—I'll suggest he did. It's practically impossible to tell New York's friends about her parents. You got to buy 'em a ticket —that's all!

I realized this anew as I passed through that Mississippi Valley, which was literally and actually flooded with gold, and it being toward sunset when we passed through it, the sky was also gold, so that a person could hardly say where

Digitized by Google

the fields of blossoms ended on the horizon and the sky begun. We rounded a bend in the so-called road, and there seated on a stone—and in passing, let me say it was the only stone we had seen since leaving Ohio—well, anyways, seated on a stone on a little rise of ground was a girl silhouetted against the blazing sky of which her maze of yellow hair seemed to be a part, her feet buried in the carpet of gleaming yellow daisies.

Just beyond her the smoke of a camp fire arose on the still, hot air, as hesitating and graceful as a cheesecloth dancer's scarf, and a tent—a funny tent that let down from the roof of a flivver—was pitched. You could smell bacon frying and a woman's voice—not a young woman's but a sweet woman's—was singing:

Weep no more, my lady,
Oh, tum-de-tum-tum-day!

And just as I was thinking "What a pretty scene! I wish we could politely stop and look at it," something went wrong with the car, and we did. And not until I had accepted Tom Westman's statement to the effect that it was the wiring did I realize that the campers was the Peterkins.

Well, I am not so old but that when I see it was Alma Peterkin who was mingling her hair with the sunset I had a little sympathy, and left her and Tom to fix the car between them, because without lifting the hood I knew it was going to be a long job, and I took Jim with me, because men are so dense, and we went over and talked with pa and ma and auntie and grandma and the kids, and Welcome come over, too, and talked to their spitz-foundland.

"Well, of all things, if it ain't the Colby-Droits!" says Mr. Peterkin, putting down an ax and greeting us like

Digitized by Google

we was English nobility by that name. "Well, well! In trouble? Can I help?"

"Oh, no!" I says hastily. "The boy can do it."

"I suppose so!" says Mr. Peterkin—but didn't mean what I meant. And then out come Mrs. P. from the depths of her canned-goods box and welcomed us over the tinned cow.

"Why, if it ain't you folks!" she says. "Sit down—I don't know where, but do!"

And I'll be dog-goned if in three minutes we wasn't chewing the rag like old friends who had been separated long enough to have something to talk about!

"You see," pa was saying, "we all was living a tight little life back East, centered around the store—general merchant, I was—and finally the profiteers drove me out—and I thank God for it—I do, that! First it was the commission houses—— Why, man, it made me sick to charge thirty cents for potatoes worth five, but how could I help it if I was going to live? And then the landlord started after me. By gollies, it's done my heart good to see all these building fellers getting theirs—if they ever actually do go to jail—and the landlord too! We stood for it for over two years—four raises, that was what he pulled on us! And then I got this idea. We didn't own our own house, but we did own our car. What's the answer—that we are here, paying rent to nobody! And we are not the only ones making our car our home, and it's no longer where we hang our hat, but where we park the bus."

"But how about a little work?" says Jim. "Or have you saved enough for the rest of your life?"

"I've saved enough to last until we find a place we'd like to locate better than where we was in Jersey," says pa. "I'll tell you the way of it: One day I decided that, in spite of appearances around home, this was still a free

Digitized by Google

country—at least the roads were free. Ma thought I was crazy, but in the end decided she'd be game and that maybe living out of doors would be as good for the kids as school until we found a home we liked. Then there was Alma—my girl. Well, Alma, she's a stenog, and she thought somebody else's typewriter out West would be as good as the one she was working on at the time, and so she just up and quit."

"And she can get a job anywhere," says her ma, "because she's real good at it."

"And my wife's mother here, and my sister," says pa—"well, it seems they had both all their lives wanted to see California. So had we all of us, for that matter, and—well, we had a session on it and come to the conclusion that the only thing in life a person need be afraid of is being afraid, and that we would just up and go. I sold out, and here we are!"

"And do you like it?" I says to ma.

"Well," says she in her comfortable manner, which reminded me a lot of my own ma—"well, I always like it in the mornings after we get started. Sometimes at night I must say my own regular kitchen would look good to me. But a person gets tired after traveling so much and seeing such a lot. Are you camping?"

"No," I says, half sorry. "We have to be in Los Angeles a certain date and was afraid we wouldn't have time."

"It's nice to be independent of hotels," says ma. "I'd begrudge them the money, even if we had it. My, when we first got that flivver I never thought we'd go this far in it! Funny thing about a car, the way it opens up the world. First off you just go for rides. Then maybe you go to Boston overnight, and it seems like a great big dangerous journey. And gradually you come to realize that roads go right on beyond any place you ever been, and that

Digitized by Google

you got a car! Why, we had ours two years before we realized we could see America in it! Say, are you going to the Grand Canyon?"

"Yes, indeed!" I says, feeling less like the supposedly privileged rich every moment.

"And take a run down into Mexico?" ma went on.

"I hadn't thought of that," I says, very humble.

"I think we might," says ma, "and that I would pass on the idea. It was given us by three maiden ladies from Maine who was driving themselves in an old Innerland. They said they thought the gambling and murders and all down in Mexico would be real interesting to see!"

Well, we left them after that. What else could a person do? But feeling we had made new friends, and somehow getting closer to these real people out here under the open sky without any trammels of civilization than we ever would of at home, where we would of been merely grocer and customer, and had no chance to find out that we were friends—real actual friends, with tastes and plans that was just alike, and although all members of the Republican Party, democratic in our hearts. I mean in the real sense. And it was the simplicity of our background had brought us so close.

"Close" is right too. Because when Tom finally decided the car was physically able to proceed and had got into the driver's seat and I sat beside him and we was on our way again I noticed he had a yellow flower in his buttonhole, which was all right, and maybe he had put it there himself, but there was also a yellow hair parked near it, and oh, well, probably he put it there himself as well, if you get me.

St. Louis was the first city we had struck that was a real city without being in any way a imitation of the East. You would think it had set out to make a pattern for cities on its own, and done a pretty good job, and I'll

Digitized by Google

say the ladies' clubs, of which there are not over half a million of them there, had quite a hand in doing it, because they are a bunch of live wires, and at once discovered who I was, and I had to make seven speeches while the rest of the crowd ate seven banquets, and me having coming West without a single decent dress, because I thought I wouldn't need them and that the cities would all be hick towns and any old thing would do! And here I, Marie La Tour, the best-dressed woman on the silver sheet, was the rag bag of the party! Actually I commenced to long for the place where I could put on my riding clothes, but in the meanwhile was heavily entertained by smart, snappy women who constantly assured me it didn't in the least matter what I wore, which is a sentence that can come only from females who positively know they are O. K. in appearance their own selves, and that you are not quite.

St. Louis is full not alone of women's clubs, fine old French manners, people who live on the interest of their incomes and hardly show it, dramatic movements, little magazines and the Davis Cup, but of automobile factories, people who will tell you how to make gin out of sweet spirits of niter, and the homes of near-beer and symphony societies and milliner shops, where I bought a couple of hats to make me feel better groomed, but Jim kicked at the extra hatbox. Well, it has all these and many other attractions, but the morning we was to make our exit was the best one to me, because my circus blood, I guess, was simply by then aching for the open road, which we understood would be opener than those we had just swum through.

And so when the bags had all gone down to the car and the last bell boy had got his, and I was all ready to start at 7:30 A. M. of a fine morning, it was no pleasure to have Jim come into the room, not to see had he left his shaving

Digitized by Google

brush as was natural, but to wave the morning paper at me.

"Kid," he says, "there is serious news. The New York police have pinned that bomb explosion onto Karl Westman's crowd, and they are looking for him and for—gee whiz! They're looking for Tom as well!"

Digitized by Google

IX

I HATED to believe my husband, but it was true. I read the piece in the newspaper with my own eyes, and there could be no doubt but that the case against both Westmans was pretty strong, though entirely circumstantial.

It seems that a certain car known to of been used by Westman had been near the place of the explosion just before it occurred; and that also, from fragments of the murder car, the police had been able to prove it was the same. Whether the Westmans' disappearance, which now came out, had been caused by the explosion or not, there was no evidence to prove—and of course we had one of the evidences, meaning Tom himself, right along with us, so we knew he, at any rate, hadn't been blown to samples.

It looked mighty funny, though—funny in the most serious sense, I mean to say, and yet no one had actually seen either of the Westmans in the explosion car that day.

"It's hard to think that kid is a criminal," says Jim, walking up and down the hotel bedroom and waving his paper in genuine and not silver-sheet-plated distress. "Lookit how he's been with us close day after day, and never showed on him!"

"Well, James Smith," I says, "criminal or not, don't forget we owe our lives to him, for the Colby would surely of crushed us both only for his prompt action."

"That's true!" says Jim. "Another minute and she'd of turned turtle, and then—good night! But what'll we do, with the bulls trying to find him?"

"Keep them from doing it!" I says. "The kid is a good kid, or I miss my guess, and an eye for an eye and a tooth

Digitized by Google

for a tooth—you know the Bible says it, and I'll say that covers the whole insurance policy. We owe him a life for our life! Besides, he may be innocent!"

"Then why does he hide?" Jim comes back at me. "How about it?"

"Well, why not ask him?" I says. "We believed him in the first place, when we left New York with him under peculiar circumstances. So why not now? Have him up and have it out."

"All right!" says Jim, and goes to the phone. "Send up my chauffeur, please," he says, and pretty soon Tom appears, suspecting nothing worse than an extra bag or package.

"Good morning, Tom," I says. "Did you see the papers yet?"

Well, Tom's face went white under the sunburn at that, which was enough for Jim.

"Shut the door!" he says, but doing it himself. "Look here, Westman," he goes on, "what do you know about the Broadway bomb explosion back in New York?"

There was a short silence. Then Tom looked Jim right in the eyes—head up and everything—not a bit like either a crook or a boastful Red.

"I left New York because of it, Mr. Smith," he says quietly. "And yet I had nothing to do with it. If you wish, I will give myself up to the St. Louis police, but they will let me go again—and nothing will be gained for justice; that I swear!"

"Humph!" says Jim. "You had nothing to do with it, eh? Then why are you hiding?"

"I can't tell you," says Tom. "I'm doing something I can't explain. I can only ask you to trust me—and that's asking a good deal, I know. But you trusted me once."

"And you saved our lives!" I broke in hotly. "Jim,

Digitized by Google

I'm willing to go on betting on him. He's not a Red—are you, Tom?"

"I—— My ideas on that have got badly disturbed since I've been on this trip—seen the country," he began, sort of hesitating, his brown eyes reminding me of a troubled hound. "A month ago I would have said yes, I am a radical! But there was a lot I didn't know—hadn't seen. I'm not one to throw the teachings of a lifetime over in a week or two, Miss La Tour, nor to pretend to do so in order to get help and protection from you folks. But no matter what I may feel about social justice, I am in no way responsible for that bomb plot, I swear!"

"And your brother?" says Jim doubtfully.

"What about your own brother?" I snapped. "Suppose everyone was to have their families' doings fastened on to them, what kind of a world would it be? You don't approve of your brother being a acrobat, but how can you help it? What I say is, let's stick by Tom until he's proved guilty. I guess I know a real person when I see it, and if he says he's got a decent reason for what he's doing I'm going to take a chance on helping him. The law can't jug us any harder for helping a supposed criminal escape to California than to New Jersey, and so I say we keep on escaping, that's all!"

Well, after that we shook hands all round. I don't know just why, and I hadn't spilled my real reason, which was that no matter what Tom had been—no matter how red, short of murder—when he crossed the Twenty-third Street ferry going West he was outgrowing it without knowing it, the same as if his radicalism was a woolen union suit that had gone to the wash. His redness was fading and shrinking while he didn't know it, and I had a hunch he was going to arrive on the coast a pretty good American if nothing—particularly cops—come up to interfere in the meantime. But of course I wasn't going to be such a boob as

Digitized by Google

to mention this and get him to fighting his unconscious education.

Well, anyways, we went downstairs, Jim having actually found his toothbrush was as usual forgotten but put it in his pocket, and made for the car, which I hardly recognized, because it had been washed—washed with a pickax, hose and time and a half for overtime, and still you could hardly see it, and it seems a waste on those muddy roads, but if you don't do it, actually that clay packs tight and the wheels wouldn't turn round, and that is no joke except on the ones who don't believe it and let it go dirty.

Well, anyways, as we were passing through the lobby after our usual breakfast in the all-night lunch, which is where you have to eat if you want to make a early start, most dining-rooms not getting up until seven-thirty or eight—well, as we was passing through the lobby I seen two mashers watching me, and I'll say it takes the Westerners to get at it that early in the morning.

One was a fat man with a round baby face, and the other a little bird with spinach, French style. I noticed them particularly, while pretending not to, because they went as far as the door and stood behind it while we got in the car. But I said nothing to Jim, because if I had of we would never of got started, and he had already made us late with his toothbrush and bad news and not being able to find the dog.

But at last, the usual morning fight about why did you bring all this junk and so forth being over, we drove off, finding our way out of the city with only the usual number of wrong turns and inquiries, and at last I took a deep breath of pleasure, for we was, after two long days of restless rest, on the broad highway again and Westward ho! and everything.

I now feel that I want to pass a few remarks upon and about Missouri, and the first of them is that Jim kept

Digitized by Google

me in a state of dread because Kansas was now more or less directly ahead.

"Kansas is flat as a pancake," he says. "And I warn you you will get awful bored going through it, because there is nothing to it but wheat. I been across twice in the train, and I know. Wheat, wheat—jack rabbits—nothing else! But you got to stick three days of it."

Well, after more than two years of married life I should of been on my guard, but he had been there and I hadn't, and so I fell for it. But with a mental reservation that was justified, because after we had actually crossed Kansas, and it proved to be quite to the contrary notwithstanding, I never believed one word Jim Smith said about what was coming next, and even he had to confess that he must of been thinking of some other fillum, and this plot just reminded him, if you get that.

Well, meanwhile Missouri was full of beet sugar, and a person certainly had to wonder where the shortage come in after seeing actually miles of beets, which ain't a particularly inspiring sight unless you can see 'em in terms of candy shops, homemade desserts and thriving canneries. Believe me, I took them for turnips, and was greatly worried to think who would eat them all, buttered or not.

Also, it seems that it's real work to cut them, and after you plow 'em up you got to smack off the top with a knife and pile 'em up, and then a person would say throw 'em in the garbage if you were to go by their looks.

But the farms where they grew were even bigger than any we had passed back East, as we now commenced to call Indiana and Ohio. Also, as the farms grew bigger the farmhouses got smaller, and often it would be only a mere shack, but with some big whale of a car parked in the yard without exception. It was in Missouri that I first began to realize that the farmers had so much to do taking even part care of all that land that they hadn't had time to

Digitized by Google

even think about their house. But they had a car, every time.

Well, for a long ways it was just the same—roads, dry now, and might of been made of granite. Then all of a sudden a little jewel citylet with perfect pavings, ect. Then out again into the wilds, where we saw our first unfenced cattle—just wandering around free and Western, and the sight of them gives a person a deep feeling of the beginnings of excitement; a sort of now-we-are-coming-to-it sense, as also do the hound dogs. Because Missouri hound dogs are one thing no West Thirty-ninth Street song writer has exaggerated, and they are actually more so. And ponies too. Only it's farmers, not cowboys, that ride them when the roads are too bad even for flivvers, which sometimes they actually are. Three ponies and four hound dogs waited outside the butcher shop in Wenzel, where we ate our lunch with the Peterkins, of sausage, near-beer and mince pie, but it tasted like New York—only better. After which we started out again, making fifteen miles an hour, which was our average all the way across that state.

But take it all in all, Missouri was to our trip like the part in the picture where you are waiting for something to happen. And yet it's a funny thing, but in pretty near every one of the Missouri towns there lived a man whose name was known all over—either a highbrow or a writer or a scientist or something, names I had seen in the papers and would naturally of supposed they came from New York. "Came from" is right—came from a perhaps yearly visit there!

Of course, it was kind of disappointing not to find any place that seemed like it needed to be enlightened on my great subject of Americanism. But, I thought, Kansas is coming, and the Wicked Wild West, and I'll surely get a chance to spill some dope out there.

I didn't try to do it but once in Missouri, and when I

Digitized by Google

did it come about this way: We had struggled over bad roads all day, and about nine o'clock at night the soldering on the radiator shell went blooey again, and of course no garage—much less a town—in sight, when all of a sudden out of nowheres we stumbled on a broad, well-lighted street with lots of cars parked down the middle, lovely public buildings and—oh, heavenly sight—a hotel, a neat, up-to-date, clean hotel, sophisticated enough to call itself a tavern. And thus, as the poet says, we came to Columbia.

Well, we was all so cross from trying to be decent to each other, and so tired and so hungry, we decided then and there that Columbia was the Gem of Missouri. And the funny part is that next morning when we got up and looked around we still thought the same, which is not always the case, as pretty near any town looks good when you are tired, but only like a good place to start from, in the morning.

But start is just what we didn't do. The radiator wouldn't let us, and I wouldn't go so far as to say that Tom done it on purpose, but it's the truth that the Peterkins hadn't caught up to us yet.

Well, anyways, while we waited we went out and took a look at what turned out to be a college town. And with no male monopoly on the place either, and I had always rather thought the rah-rah stuff was confined to boys, having often in the old days played New Haven, Boston and Trenton.

But here it was different. Young girls and young fellows both was there—hundreds of 'em—and a fine-looking lot there were, walking about on a campus with six great vine-covered columns standing on it, and it would make a beautiful location for a heart picture, only hard to get to for the footage you could make use of in it.

Well, anyways, I thought here is a good place to talk

Digitized by Google

to the youth of the country and instill good anti-red stuff into their head, because in New York there are a lot of redlets among the college students, and catch 'em young is my idea.

Well, the more veil drawn over that speech the better. I had a big audience, I'll say that. And I talked this and that for nearly an hour, arranged by one of the teachers, and at the end I says, "Are there any questions? I would be glad to answer them." And what do you think I got? One boy says, "Are you a picture actress, Miss La Tour?" and another says, "Miss La Tour, what is a Red?" And by this I do not mean they were simps, but that they had never heard of either of us! And what is further, when I explained, I myself was the only one of the two they seemed much interested in.

I realized also, with a shock, that of course the people round this country would not know about me or about the Reds, though they had heard of Bolshevikis in a dim, far-off sort of way, because the newspapers we had been seeing didn't give any space to them, but to things like crops and ect. In other words, they were advertising the good things we had, such as the best and biggest harvest in fifteen years, instead of the things the Reds thought and did; and it's the Eastern newspapers gave them that snappy title of Reds that's so easy to remember, and you know the advertising value of a good trade name.

As for myself, why, I guess it was just a accident, that boy never having heard of me, but good for my vanity—or rather I should say good for what ailed it, but you know what I mean.

Well, anyways, the next morning after my educational speech on who I was and so forth the Peterkins family reached town, and so our radiator shell healed up at the sight of them, and pretty soon we set off out of the Gem of Missouri and continued our way through the first state

Digitized by Google

which had lived up to stage-manager specifications, looking for our way to Kansas City and more places which was named after Daniel Boone.

I'll say this Daniel was some animal tamer, the best known story about him being the time he went into the lion's den. But there are plenty of others told on him around the Missouri River, including one about a bear's den also, and how he tamed the wild Indians. And it seems he run several hotels as well, or at least we passed them with his name on them, besides a ferryboat which took us across the river from Boonville, a town that was also named for him—the old original ferryboat I guess it was, with a sort of bustle or egg beater or something on behind to make it go, and a whistle like an old maid calling for help.

Yes, I'll twitter that was some boat. Flat-bottomed, it was, too, or would of been, only it was humped up in the middle and also sort of slanting to one side. Jim said it was listed to the left, but I had a strong feeling it would be listed among the missing before we got to the other side of the river. It had what I supposed was a donkey engine in it, because it had a kick like a mule but never got anywheres, and the smokestack looked like the rest of the boat ought to of wore starched ruffles and trousers strapped under its boots—if you get me. You seen pictures where the atmosphere crowd wears that kind of silk lids. But this was not by any means a property boat. I would of trusted it a whole lot more if it had of been, because Goldringer always takes good care of his stars, and doubles them in all the really dangerous bits, even if he does carry a heavy insurance on them made out in his own name.

No, this was a real, genuine old antique—called the Daniel Boone after the first owner—and I could see how the natives felt about how safe it was, because a young feller with a horse and something which I took to be an old

Digitized by Google

translation from the early English for buggy got on board with a bunch of lilies in his hand. I, of course, pointed that out to Jim as the ferry trembled gently away from shore and commenced to float kind of aimlessly up and down between the chalk cliffs. But Jim says it is Sunday —he is probably taking them to his best girl. But I knew better.

"He's probably a decent young Christian," I says, "and don't want to die, even by drowning, without some of the usual formalities."

But we had quite a good time on that journey by water—kind of a desperate good time because of realizing it might be our last.

The Peterkins was already aboard when we got there, in the strange, mysterious way a camping flivver has of beating a big car that uses the hotels to it nearly every time.

Well, the Peterkins were there, all eight of them, and the young man and his river horse and seagoing low-cut barouche, or whatever it was, the captain with his cap on so you could tell him from the crew—who wasn't allowed a cap—ourselves and dog. And as it took pretty near half an hour for Daniel to make up her mind which part of the other chalk bank to hit, or to remember where she had berthed last visit, we had lots of time to enjoy the novelty of crossing the river in 1841 or less and to take each other's picture. I took Jim sitting in the car, and then we took Tom and Welcome on the running board, and then they took me, and we took the Peterkins and they took us, so we would have the snaps as souvenirs of this experience, even if you couldn't see any of the ferryboat or the river in the finder, but hoped in our hearts that when they were developed we would mysteriously see the whole Missouri, Daniel and all, in the way a person does kid theirself over a camera.

It was just beyond here that we come to the first place

Digitized by Google

in eighteen hundred miles that I could really call a hick town. It was hardly a town at that, and for two reasons—besides again needing gas—we stopped there.

For the first one, there was a country fair going full time, and it was also time to eat—we could tell it the minute the smell of hot Hamburger and sizzling dogs hit us. Funny thing, but when you are on a long trip almost any time is lunch time; but this really was, and by this stage of our journey we had learned to eat when we saw it and run no risks.

Well, that fair was just what I had been looking for all the way, and at last I seen it—full of vegetables of both sexes, and fruit and homemade-pie contests and patch-work quilts—and I got out to laugh. I didn't get out to preach Americanism. I was not such a simp even then but that I knew that was one thing I didn't have to preach to the farmer. Having his hands and his money in the actual physical country itself, patriotism was something he would already have a faint suspicion of, and could literally give me cards and spades on it—well, spades anyways. But I did get out to laugh.

Well, never in my life or the place where we deal on Eighth Avenue did I see the fruit and vegetables I see here. And I was admiring them and listening in on the hicks and feeling awful superior when Jim, who has the real masculine lack of shame about asking questions when he don't know something, started shooting me a few.

"Say, what are them things like big eggs?" he says.

"Why, eggplant!" I says very shortly. And I wish you could of heard the big hick standing beside me let out a roar.

"Excuse me, miss," he says, "but them are cattle squash."

"Well, there is such a thing as a eggplant," I says, feeling very cheap.

Digitized by Google

And then all of a sudden I realized an awful truth. Out here I was the hick! No joke—it was a fact. Maybe the big friendly giant in the snappy red tie—snappy in the sense of being snapped onto his collar button with a rubber band—couldn't recognize spinach à la renie if he seen it at the Ritz, or eggs Benedictine; but, by heck, out here I couldn't recognize raw spinach or eggplant! So I seized, as the poet says, opportunity by the forelock and decided right on the spot, which was a spot marked by a dropped tomato, that here was my chance to learn something, and not miss a single scrap in the great big interesting jig-saw puzzle which, if I could ever get it fitted together, would mean my dear country and give me a real picture of the whole of it.

"Say, mister," I says, smiling up at the kind strong face and keen blue eyes above that innocent red tie, and using the sweet appealing look which has won me a million friends from the magic of the screen—"say, mister, we don't know a darn thing about this stuff. Would you kindly wise us up as to the names of some of it?"

Well, he did. And again I had perhaps best draw a veil, because in five minutes I found that the only vegetables I knew in their native state was potatoes, corn and onions. On my word! And here is another thing, too—that big farmer didn't laugh at my ignorance again. He was kinder to me than I had intended being to him, and I come away from that town humble. I had seen a hick village—yes—with the sunlights and the footlights and the spot all turned on it at once. And all I could think of was that I myself was kind of cheap and temporary, and that the farmers weren't very funny, after all. There was something deep behind them that I hadn't understood.

Honest, I know it sounds simple to be made to feel religion by a potato, but it can happen, I know—it was done to me. I was made to feel eternity in a cabbage.

Digitized by Google

And when I realized how all this stuff come out of the earth and that these simple people done it—well, it's the only time vegetables ever brought tears to my eyes except once when I tried to peel an onion.

But I'm not kidding—don't get me wrong. The festival I saw there, with fruits of the earth and of the hands of women, with basket lunches and hot dogs to grace the festive literal board on two trestles, was more of a feast in the truest sense than any fifty-dollar-a-cover Thanksgiving party yet given on Broadway.

I carried the memory of it in my heart all through the bumpy, washed-out Missouri roads, over long, pretty dreary detours, down to the point where on a high plateau outside of Kansas City we said good night to the Peterkins, who stopped to camp beside the schoolhouse, where already there were two other evening fires gleaming—which meant that there was water and no "Forbidden" signs. I sort of envied them that they could stop off there. The other cars looked friendly—a Climber from West Virginia with a mother and two fine big sons, and a motorcycle man and wife from Nebraska. It seemed like we were to be suddenly torn away from the free magic of the road, while it would sleep with them through the night; that the spell of their adventure would keep up like a lovely play with no acts and no final curtain. But we had to put on our hats and come out into the street of Civilization, and it made me sad, although I knew we would return to the road next day—to say nothing of how sad it made Tom, although Alma gave him a look to put under his pillow. I felt that they had something we weren't getting—something we lacked to make our journey all of a piece, as ma says. And then I got a comforting thought. We would have something that they would lack—and which looked mighty good to me—meaning a warm bath.

So we waved to them and swirled down into winding,

Digitized by Google

new, prosperous Kansas City—golden with its promise for the future, startling in its present achievement, and full, to me, of the excitement that comes of the name it justly give itself—the Gateway to the West! Beyond Kansas City lay all the dime novels of my youth and Jim's, riding clothes for me, unknown dangers, undreamable beauties—the Thing, big, hard to put into words, which I now realized I had been unconsciously hurrying toward all this time. Up to now I had been interested—intensely—but I had been willing to go fast—fast as we could. And now I wanted to go slow, to make the journey last, like a kid with a lollypop.

Well, anyways, when we got into the hotel I ran downstairs for a moment to get a paper of face powder. I went alone, Jim having started to clean up, and I needed it. And as I crossed the lobby and went out who would I see but one of the mash birds which had hung around the hotel in St. Louis!

Of course there was nothing strange in this. We was often by now running into the same tourists again and again. But when we did as a rule they smiled—but this one did not. Neither did he try a mash. Instead when he caught sight of me he deliberately tried for me not to catch sight of him! He pulled his cap down over his eyes and sank out of the way, putting up a newspaper in front of him. And that was not all. No sooner was I in the drug store than he followed along the street and looked in through the window. My back was turned, but I could see him in a small shaving mirror on the counter, and there was no doubt but that he had followed to be sure it was really me!

All the time while I bought my powder and chinned with the girl I was thinking fast. We hadn't seen these birds all day. It seemed as if they might have come on by train. Was he really spying on me, and if so, why?

Digitized by Google

Why did he first hide from me, and then follow me? And then I got a glimmer. It was just a chance, but I ought to make sure, because he couldn't be following me. He must be following Tom!

Digitized by Google

X

IT is a terrible thing to be a picture actress in a desperate situation with no director to holler out what to do next or say go home now—we will shoot the rest to-morrow.

And yet that is just where I found myself at the end of the fourth reel, with a mysterious stranger spying on me through the window very uneasily, and no Jig Wells to yell at the camera man that will be enough, Billy! The only thing that flashed through my mind with any comfort was that we were registered as plain James Smith, wife, chauffeur and dog, or something. And then I realized maybe it only looked like a cheap alias to that sleuth, who had "bull" written all over him as plain as print, and that he had probably already recognized my face. In that case it might be he was simply registering interest in a famous artist—and yet, no, that didn't hold water, because if his reason was innocent curiosity why would he try to escape my notice the way he had? He had me guessing, all right; and when, after I had paid for my stuff and walked boldly out of the shop and he had ducked again, I thought, well, I will play this bright young feller a trick, and so I instead of going into the hotel walked down the block where there was a garage with two entrances, but not the one where we had left our bus. Well, I walked into the office and when the polite young feller that run it was asking what I wanted I slipped my handkerchief under the telephone book that was laying on the desk.

"Would it be possible for me to hire a car by the week from you?" I says convincingly, not being for nothing an actress since birth.

Digitized by Google

"Why, surely!" says the poor fish, seeing a dream of a good deal. "Dream" was right.

"Well," says I, "then we won't need to send for our own car. I will come back to-morrow and make arrangements."

Well, he bowed me out, and I walked around the corner and came in the other entrance after a minute, and there was the bull, just as I had expected, asking what lady was that and did she have a gray Colby-Droit with a young Jewish chauffeur!

"Oh, you little Curlylock Holmes!" I says to myself. "Why was you wasted on the mere art of the silver sheet?"

And then old beef face went out, and the young manager spied me.

"I forgot my handkerchief," I says. "I think I laid it on the desk."

And sure enough I had—whatter you know about that? After which I run home to the Muehlebach as fast as my French heels would carry me and broke the news to Jim, who the barber had just cleaned so's you could see his face for the first time in nearly two weeks.

"The bulls are after Tom—and also probably us!" I says. "Oh, Jim, what will we do?"

My heart was nearly stopped as I said it, not alone on account of Tom, but also for what the newspapers might do to us if we were caught, because when a person's selfish interest is at stake they are apt to change their minds, and Jim is only human. But he didn't. He stopped with both brushes suspended in midair and his suspenders heaving with emotion.

"They shan't get him!" he says excitedly. "The kid's too good for 'em, and we'll put one over, that's what!"

"But how?" I says. "They will trace him easy enough."

"Just you listen in on this telephone call!" says Jim.

Digitized by Google

"I may not be the sleuth you are, but in me there has been lost a great scenario writer!"

And at that he went to the telephone, and pretty soon, for their system ain't like the N. Y. one, he had Tom on the wire.

"Say, Westman," says Jim, "do you remember where the Peterkins are camping to-night? I thought you would. Well, just take our car with all the stuff in it and go this minute and camp with them. Say you want a night in the open. Sure they are. The missus just spotted one half an hour ago, and they'll pinch you sure. We will hire a bus in the morning and join you at five o'clock—the sun is up by then—at the end of the Boulevard, where it turns back into the Old Trails road. I get you! Sure I can manage the small bags! Hustle now! Good luck, and see you at sunrise!"

And to think I had pretty near come to believe Jim had outgrown his sense of romance! And after this he put in a early call, and then we hastened to put in a little early sleep.

And I'll say a little sleep is just what it felt like when the telephone bell rang at 4:30 or the middle of the night, but the clerk assured us it was what the doctor'd ordered. We simply could not get out of bed, but did, not believing or caring that we had been asleep since nine o'clock the evening before. Also, I couldn't for the first few minutes mind much if Tom was arrested or murdered or the hotel was on fire or want anything except to go to sleep again. After another five minutes that clerk, who had experienced tourists before, rang again, and so we actually did come to life this time, and our semiconscious condition gradually changed to excitement and pep, and I at last climbed into my riding clothes that I had been looking forward to for so long but hadn't up to now felt Western enough actually to do it.

Digitized by Google

Then, shivering and yawning, we stole down to the all-night lunch room as per usual for our breakfast, and twenty minutes later we was in the hired car and—the glorious fresh morning that was all lit as though with ambers—rushing down the endless, winding boulevards of the city, the lights still twinkling wanly below us, and telling each other how glorious it was, and what boobs people are to sleep late, and why don't everybody always get up at dawn, and they don't know what they're missing by not, and let's us always do it the rest of our life, even after we get back home, and actually meaning it at the time. And then before long we come to the Peterkins' camp where it lay by the schoolhouse, tucked into the elbow of a little hill, the camp fire already smoking and Tom in the act of frying the family bacon. Alma was laying the table on the running board, and at the sound of our arrival ma stuck first her head and then the rest of her out of the tent.

"My sakes!" she says, evidently real glad to see us. "You folks have come just in time to eat!"

"We already have," I says. "And we got to be on our way soon."

Jim had meanwhile paid off the hired car and took out the bags.

"I think it was real generous of you to let Tom camp out with us last night," says ma in her innocent way. "I know how boys do love it. And he's been that useful! Wouldn't let me or Alma touch the supper dishes! And such pleasant company too! We're real sorry to let him go."

"Well," I thought, "I hope you would feel the same if you knew all ——"

And then, Tom having taken from Alma a quick cup of coffee and a slow good-by, we caught Welcome and got in our own bus and waved so long, we will see you all real

Digitized by Google

soon and so forth and ectera, and started out with the law behind us but the wilds before us.

Oh, the comfort of wearing pants on this kind of a trip! Or any other place, for that matter. For the first time in my life I commenced to see Dr. Mary Walker's point, and that pants is still another thing men have that is better than women, and one of the reasons why they feel so free. You will notice if you look in history books that back in old times before even men had a vote they wore skirts, and the early English kings and Roman emperors wore negligees—no kidding, they really did! Long ones that dragged around on the floor. And I have no doubt that in those days the kings set the styles just as the motion-picture actors do now. Well, they wore not alone Mother Hubbards, or at best knee-length dresses, much like those of the modern women, but also long hair and lace guimps and a lot of other junk which kept their minds off the serious affairs of the world, and I notice that the more free they got from clothes the more votes and ect. they got too. A mere ride in the park gives a woman no idea of breeches, but let her once wear 'em in a car and the free West for two weeks and she will have learned something it will be hard to make her forget.

Also, you can't imagine the comfort of being dressed like a bum, and Jim the same, and the car not washed, but the stuff tied on good and secure with lots of rope and let 'em think what they like. Putting on my riding pants seemed to cut me loose from civilization in the sense that I had up to now understood it, and I felt more free and natural than ever in my life, all but for the possibility of them cops getting on our trail. But presently we forgot even that, having to keep our minds first of all on getting clear of Kansas City, which is practically all boulevards that go around and meet themselves and are so beautiful, not to say complicated, that the visiting stranger can

Digitized by Google

literally hardly steer themselves away. But at last we shook them, headed for Emporia and Hutchinson, and sincerely hoping to see every part of both cities except their jails.

Now it's a funny thing, but true, that a place seldom looks the way a person expects it to, and the more you have heard about it and the greater the number of details that have been stuck into the description the less it is like that when you get there.

When we struck into Kansas all I knew about it was that we had to cross it, except for Jim's descriptions which had left a very definite still in my mind of fields of jack rabbits who wouldn't wait to be looked at, and a lot of perfectly flat space growing wheat, with flour sacks between the rows to put it into by modern machinery, and grain elevators which I supposed would be like hotel elevators, only of course not gilded, at the R. R. stations to take the sacks up high enough to dump them into the trains. And outside of that nothing, for day after day.

Well, see your oculist and then see America, because you got to take a film off the eyes of the mind to see it right. The great oculist, Experience, had shown Jim and I how to look these past few weeks, I guess, for certainly Jim didn't see Kansas right when he saw it the first time from the train. It goes through the flat part of the state, probably, because that is where a sensible train would. But take it free gratis, Kansas is not flat.

All the way from Kansas City to Hutchinson, where we spent our first night in a Harvey Hotel and was so green we didn't know what that meant, we was going over hills and across washes. As for the wheat, it was all cut and taken away some place, bags and all, and nobody can tell me those were wheat fields anyways. They were counties, not fields. Nobody need tell me a field can be that big—no, not even after I've seen it with my own eyes.

Digitized by Google

But through these endless stretches of stubble, which looked like somebody was growing the world supply of hairbrushes on 'em, the roads begun to be better, giving such ease to our motorists' hearts as only another motor nut can understand; and we begun also to see another kind of field, by which I mean to say oil fields, almost as big and generous as the wheat ones, but not so famed in song and guidebook, as the poet says. It sure does give a person a funny feeling to see miles upon miles of oil derricks against the sky line. They look like somebody had decided to build a whale of a big city, got as far as the steel construction, and then quit.

Also, we saw one jack rabbit.

We slept, as I say, in Hutchinson, finding room for our bus with some trouble on account of the thousands of cars that had come in for the state fair. I didn't suppose there was as many automobiles of the fifteen-hundred to three-thousand-dollar class in the whole United States as I seen parked in Hutchinson's main street that Saturday night. And though I would of loved to stay for the fair, still we thought we better not, on account of the law, which, although we had by now apparently given it the slip, we felt we'd better continue, so we went on our way, after our first Harvey breakfast, for which a person cannot be too early.

And anyways, I had nothing to say to Kansas. Why should I stop to talk anti-soviet in a place where they have already got for themselves all the very coöperative stuff that the soviet has to offer, and managed to get it done under our crude, cruel and miserable democratic form of government? Believe me, after I learned what their grain elevators really meant, and heard about the jointly owned harvesting machinery, and the direct marketing methods, I thought if only Trotzky could see this, wouldn't he feel cheap?

Digitized by Google

It was about this point that I laid off trying to reform the West and commenced frankly learning from it and enjoying it, for I realized that the translation from the Russian of workingmen's council meant nothing in the world but our old-fashioned town meeting!

Here is another thing: All through Kansas we saw no poor. Nothing or nobody upon which professional millionaires could ease their conscience, and—so far as I could tell—no blatant millionaires either. What I mean to say is, there was no mean little hovels, no slums, nothing that looked poor. Sometimes there would be a tiny shack set high on a windy brown-and-gold plateau in the middle of a big ranch, or on the edge of a great stretch of wheat stubble; but these looked striving, not poor, and that is a very different thing. In fact Kansas is populated by a vast, superior bourgeoisie—and again that is very Russian, because no matter how they may yell against the bourgeoisie over there, the net profs of their plans, if they was ever actually to be carried out, would result in a bourgeoisie. You can't have equality of distribution and get away from it. Well, anyways, that is what Kansas has.

Further, Kansas farmers have got the most sense of any farmers I seen yet, because they have pretty near solved the farm problem, and also it is a Russian method, only again they and Lenine don't know it.

What I mean to say is, they solve the farm problem by not living on their farm, but by living together in ideal little cities with good hotels, snappy—no kidding—real and genuinely snappy stores, both department and specialty, a real picture house or two, drug stores that are finer than anything we have in the East, and by commuting to their farms instead of living on the farm and commuting to the city.

It is so simple and so wise that I wonder I didn't think of it myself. I mean to say it is one of the most important

Digitized by Google

things in America, what is happening on those Kansas farms, and here it goes on record that I hope a few other states will take notice the way I did, and learn. I am talking from what I seen with my own eyes, and as one town is a fair average example of the whole state I will set it down just as it unrolled itself before me like a seven-reel feature, and hope it may prove of benefit to the oncoming generation or something, as the high-class writers say. Only please kindly remember that this is all truth, and no exaggeration. I will now begin with my sample town and how we come into it.

Well, back East in Missouri, Illinois and so forth, the country had been like home a good deal, as I guess I have said—the same sort of thing like you see when you take a ride outside of Boston or New York or Philly, only richer, bigger and more fertile.

But when we struck into Kansas we begun to feel a change—subtle at first, but growing stronger and stronger rapidly, like a band of martial music swinging down the street. And a person, meaning me, began to recognize this country as part of what I had been unconsciously hurrying toward—the big, rich, wide, varied and untrammeled America.

Well, we come into this town I'm telling you about over a series of rolling hills—smooth, rounded hills without any trees on them, but carpeted with close-growing flowers of purple and gold, like our aster and goldenrod, only so short-stemmed that they was actually like one of these bright, old-fashioned worsted rugs my grandma used to make, only big enough to cover as far as you could see, and tempting you to walk over the world.

Then all of a sudden we would plunge down an incline, with terrifying but dramatic washouts on either side of the narrow road, and there, like a cluster of schoolgirls hiding and twittering among themselves, would be a grove

Digitized by Google

of cottonwood trees nestled in between the soft bosoms of the hills. Then again there would be wide stretches of stubble where wheat had been—sometimes lying on the flat top of an immense plateau that fell suddenly to the dry bed of the Arkansas River. Then the road would twist away on a ledge of land that faintly foreshadowed the mesas we was to see later, and we could look down on the dry river bed—a mere streak of gray sand—across a narrow, crumbly looking stretch of burned prairie grass where cattle who seemed entirely out on their own wandered aimlessly about or nibbled at the bark of the drooping trees along the sandy bank far below.

Then we would travel over a desolate rolling prairie waste with more oil wells pointing to heaven—and smelling to heaven, too, decorating the sky line, where the clear sky comes down like a circular drop, well lighted. And then more intimate rolling hillets carpeted with coarse bright flowers, dry and brittle with the hot sun when you got out to pick them. Then without any warning of a town—as usual—we slid into a triple colonnade of old cottonwoods—a cool, green-and-yellow cathedral, so shady that the mud of weeks ago had not dried on the narrow double roadways, and in a few minutes we come onto Main Street, and five minutes later we found the right front spring was busted on our car. Which is how we come to be in Garden City two whole days.

Also, it is how I come to be able to realize what I now know about Kansas farms, because I stayed in the heart of several hundred of them right in that very town, which but for that spring so luckily breaking we would of dashed through without understanding.

Well, now here is the idea: On the surface Garden City didn't have some of the trimmings of the other small places we had been, but the first thing we noticed was that it had eleven garages, which for a burg of about five

Digitized by Google

thousand people is going some. But do you suppose it was the tourists that pour through which supported them? Yes, you do suppose so. And so did we, and the both of us are wrong. The farmers support them, because pretty near every farmer there has two cars and a truck, whether he is a truck farmer or not.

Now some more. Pretty near every storekeeper and business man in that town is also a farmer!.

There! How do you like that? Pretty good, eh? Well, one of the big troubles with farming specialties like wheat and so forth, especially on a big scale, is that it is what the fellow that told me this called seasonal work, which leaves a long quiet season on the farmers' hands. So the rest of the time, why not run a drug store, like old Doc Burns, or a picture theater or a haberdashery or a restaurant? They can run out to the farm in their car every day, and they do that as well. I know it sounds like a pipe dream, but it isn't. I seen it myself. Sometimes a farm will be run by two fellers on shares, and they spell each other staying on the farm, which gives the other a chance to see and know the folks in town. And speaking of fellers, meaning mere men, you don't know the half of it, dearie!

I went into a department store in this town to buy a pair of gloves I saw in the window—a pair of standard make of the same identical brand I would of asked for on the Avenue at home, and I got talking with the girl which sold them to me. She was a pleasant-faced, quiet girl—not a chicken, but fresh and attractive, and with her hair done in the regulation cootie coops. I saw them cootie coops the whole ways across the country, by the way, and they give me a jolt of surprise every time. Well, anyways, I got acquainted with this girl, and what do you think she and two girl friends which was also working as clerks in that same store was doing?

Digitized by Google

They had each of them taken up a quarter section of grazing land ten miles out of town—that is to say, a hundred and sixty acres apiece, adjoining ground, had put up a frame house where the three corners come together, so that they could all three live on their land as the law requires, yet live together, and they commuted to work every day. They had recently proved claim, and already one girl had been offered three thousand dollars for her property.

Now that's American womanhood, enterprise, courage and opportunity for you! Beyond them few well-chosen words I personally pass no comments or remarks upon it. Pass them for yourself, but whatever you say, remember it's a true fact! And what is more, it is not unique. There is other Western girls got property that way in other towns. I am merely giving you a sample. Yet I can't help contrasting it with a girl I know back home who was so relieved when she paid the last installment on her Liberty Bond, because now she could sell it and pay the last installment on her fur coat!

Main Street in Garden City—and a dozen others like it—is as wide and as well paved as Fifth Avenue. At one end is a park. The people own this park, and they know it and enjoy it and use it. They go out there and lie on the grass. They take a book or a paper out there to read. There are no Keep-Off-the-Grass signs in the public parks west of the Mississippi. The folks don't need 'em. But if they use their parks they are pretty fair about not abusing 'em, too—and they sure are pretty, I mean the parks are. Generally there is a courthouse in the middle. The courthouse and the schoolhouse are certain to be really fine buildings in any small town in the Southwest, no matter what else they may have forgotten to build. But I love their parks. It gives such a pleasant, easy

Digitized by Google

feeling to your heart to know you can pull your bench any place you want to in it.

And the folks! When I think of Kansas folks I want to cry and laugh and my heart swells all up. Because they are so kind, so warm and friendly—so alive. And, oh, how tall! Really it's the truth, I saw more tall people there than anywheres in my life before. I won't forget in a hurry the three six-foot, chestnut-haired, deep-bosomed beauties who waited on table at that Garden City Hotel. And speaking of hotels, most of these towns need good ones, and the man who builds a chain of them from Ohio to New Mexico will make a fortune off the tourists. The town folks are home people and don't need or want hotel life, which is why the hotels are so poor, I guess.

Well, anyways, these Kansas girls were the very biggest, handsomest and quietest I seen anywheres. They would be no good in musical comedy—they are too big. But they just naturally go grab off quarter sections of land—you can tell they would by looking at them. And the men the same. I don't know does the big farms make the big people or the big people the big farms, but I know that they are, if you get me at all. And their hearts are big as the rest of them. Oh, I love Kansas—I love it! I'll always want to go back there!

Well, on the second day of our breakdown I was sitting in the park at noontime with the thermometer ninety in the shade and the temperature of the book I was reading something over a hundred and twenty, because it was the bedroom scene in Juliet and Romeo, which I was taking this opportunity to read some of it, and also to study up a little in my grammar and dictionary, because I am very imitative and I was already talking like Kansas folks, and I realized my Newyorkese was pretty well nicked, and in self-defense I had better learn a little standard stuff.

Well, anyways, I was sitting there reading and dream-

Digitized by Google

ing, and Jim was over across the street looking to be sure the bus wasn't ready yet, which of course it wasn't, when who would drive up in a big car but old Doc Burns, who had helped me get hep to the town such a lot when we got acquainted in his drug store which he ran on the side of a few hundred across of wheat in his idle moments. And whatter you know if he didn't have a bag of golf clubs in that car when he stopped it at the curb!

"Hello, Mrs. Smith!" he says. "You and your husband care to run out to the country club and go around once? I generally put in my noon hour like this.

Can you beat it? Here was my wild and woolly West—my uncivilized, wide prairie town that I had left N. Y. to inform about things in general! To see the doc beaming over the edge of his big bus, a black ribbon hanging from his eye glasses, you would of thought he was the editor of a highbrow magazine out for a little recreation. Mentally I threw up my hands. This was the last thing I had expected.

But of course I said yes, and went across to get Jim, who was standing watching Tom help the blacksmith with the spring and wearing a cow-puncher's hat he had bought that morning with a collar on it that would do for Welcome when Jim got tired of the hat. Well, I told Jim of the invitation we had and he nearly dropped dead.

"Have they got a country club here?" he says, thanking the doc.

"Well, we've got no clubhouse yet, but we got a nine-hole course," says the doc, "and the clubhouse will come along soon."

Well, in the meanwhile we came along, digging our clubs out from under everything in our car, because by now we never took anything out of the car at night that we didn't actually need, but left it in the garage, hoping the darn stuff would all be stolen by morning, but it

Digitized by Google

never was—not even when we left it on a street and went in to eat.

Well, we put ourselves and clubs into the doc's car, and then, believe me, he showed his Western blood, because he drove that bus like it was a mean hoss, and off we went into the flower-carpeted hills, turning abruptly from the road into a prairie—and there we was, on the golf course!

At least so the doc said, and gradually we seen it was, although there wasn't much to distinguish it from the surrounding hills except the greens, which was made of white sand. Otherwise it was—prairie!

Well, I and Jim had learned the motions of golf in order to do a society country-life fillum, but the doc played it because he liked it, and what he did to us was a crime. He beat us eight down—or up, whichever is correct. Of the actual game the less said the better, but of the course—the score was about like this:

First hole: Two prairie dogs beat us down it.

Second hole: Jackrabbit crossed in haste.

Fourth hole: Jim and the doc killed a rattlesnake right by the pin.

Sixth hole: Doc pointed out dead rattler he had killed there yesterday noon.

Seventh hole: Gopher started to watch the putting but changed its mind and beat it before we really got started.

Eighth hole: Two lizards went down it hurriedly.

Ninth Green: Completely destroyed by prairie dogs overnight.

Now this is a true story, or as near true as a mere woman can get, and if anybody thinks I am telling it to make fun of that golf course they got another guess coming. I tell it because of how it shows what these Westerners will do in the face of the wilderness.

The doc knew what the place lacked as good as we did—he was no fool. But he also knew that great things could

Digitized by Google

be accomplished, and we believed him. And he is, after all, only a good sample of many another such spirit in many another such town in this broad land. I only cite him because I knew him.

We talked of the future and saw visions of it through his eyes as we walked back toward his car—hoping for no more rattlers and grateful for high boots. And as we walked and talked a second car drove in and parked, and from it got a tall, lean man—a man with a flannel shirt, wide-brimmed hat, high boots and a gun on his hip—the real Western figure at last! He came directly toward us —a handsome man with a clean-cut Yankee face—but at the doc's words my heart froze. I seemed to know what they would be almost before he spoke them.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith," says the doc, "this is our sheriff, Mr. Bird—the best six-gun man in the county!"

Digitized by Google

XI

THE sheriff gave a little hitch to his gun belt, removed the broad-brimmed hat and acknowledged the introduction with a keen glance of his blue eyes that seemed to go right through us and see Tom Westman hiding behind us.

"I've been trying to meet you people ever since I heard you were in town," he said evenly. "And what I came out for was something special."

Well, do you get how I felt when he pulled that line? You do not! Not unless you been recently evading the law. And, believe me, when a remark like that is made by a regular Western he-sheriff with a gun on him there is a lot of extra feeling comes natural to you. But this sheriff turned from us to Doc Burns.

"I came out, doc," says the sheriff, "to see how you liked that new bunker of mine I been building?"

He pointed with pride to a ridge of earth right behind us, and we turned to admire, the doc perfectly sincerely, but as for me, all I could think of was a sigh of relief that the bunker was what he had come for. At the same time there was a dash of disappointment at finding the first real Wild Western sheriff I had seen absorbed in improving a golf course—of which, it turned out, he was vice-president!

"There goes the old West!" I thought to myself. "We have, alas! no more of it outside of what Bill Hart does."

But I thought too soon. It seems this Sheriff Bird was good. He could play both parts without being doubled. Because when we was driving back to the city the doc mentioned casually that the sheriff had the week before taken a lunatic single-handed off a train.

Digitized by Google

"This nut had a gun," says the doc, "and had held up four passenger coaches. When the train stopped to let Bird on he was going to get Bird, too, but Bird shot the gun out of the feller's hand and took him easily. Bird, he's the best six-gun man in the county, I'm telling you!"

Well, I was glad he was, because here I seemed to see a new sort of ambidextrous West, if you can get the idea; a West which could at once be wild and tame—hold-ups or golf-links, they took 'em as they come. But then again I would of felt less restless if I could of been sure that sheriff was exclusively interested in his Wild West combination menagerie and golf course. It was plain the sleuth I spotted at Kansas City had either lost us or shot by us, never dreaming we would stop off in such a small place, and not thinking of repairs, and apparently having said nothing to Bird.

But having seen that keen-eyed sporting sheriff, I didn't feel any real sorrow when we got back to the hotel and Tom told us that the bus was ready and packed. So I took a photo of Jim and the doc and Welcome standing in front of the car, and then Jim took one of me and the doc and Welcome standing in the same place, so we would have something to remind us of Garden City, and then the next thing we took was our departure.

It's a funny thing, but from here on I find myself kind of up against it when I try to tell about what I seen—I mean, saw. I wish, and wish hard, somebody had given me a grammar at the date they give me my first automobile—meaning myself, for I have bought most of my own presents with my own money, which is more often the case with stage and screen girls than the public seems to think, and it's the form of investment they make—especially the jewelry—and fewer managers do personal favors than do sound business.

Well, anyways, I wish that I had bought myself a little

Digitized by Google

education the time when I bought myself that diamond bar-pin with the first bunch of kale I earned that didn't have to be planted in the home yard. Then I could put down my thoughts on America better. Because writing a piece about the country up to where the real West commences is like writing about business, and it is pleasant, but concerns everyday things—things it is easy to speak about. Trying to write about the Far West is like trying to write religion. You can't do it. And yet if you have seen that part of the country you have to try. There are deep things in my heart as I look back on the trip, but how can I tell them on paper? How could I, even if I knew the words? I keep, in my mind, going back to that waiter on Sixth Avenue, and like him, think there is no way to tell the ones which haven't seen this country what it is like. "Buy 'em a ticket." By gosh, that waiter said a mouthful!

Well, anyways, out we went from Garden City early in the afternoon, humping along a pretty rotten road to a place in the middle of Nowhere called Syracuse, where we found a hotel like a stage one, only real, with a bath, good food and everything, and so we thought we would hold that hotel right down and not let it get away from us or be lost on the prairie.

This hotel had tiled private baths, art furniture, silver and linen like a private home, and fresh white carnations on the tables—with food to match, I may add. It was some hotel, to be all by itself, I felt, like it had been dropped out of heaven onto the prairie. A Harvey House it was, and you got to hand it to them Harveys—Moe Harvey, that advertised and give his name to the desert, and his brother Fred, who put private baths onto it!

Well, that night we stayed there, sitting out under the vine-covered colonnade, Welcome laying peaceful and exhausted at our feet, and feeling a strange new sense of

Digitized by Google

space—space—of the world having no edge to it, of there being no horizon out there ahead of us in the violet night, but only a great big Promise.

Well, next morning we started out to look for it, and headed for La Junta, and don't ask me what it means, I forgot to ask the hotel clerk. And I never did know what them foreign names meant, because Jim's Spanish turned out to be the kind you sing a naughty song in after making sure there is nobody in the room will understand it—for fear they will be shocked, of course!

Anyways we headed for La Junta, which from the name whatever it means, sounds like it ought to be in Mexico, but actually is in Colorado. Coming out of Syracuse, we crossed a high plateau, and before we had gone a very long ways lit into a sand storm, most of the sand coming from the bottom of the Arkansas River. We had to put up the curtains, and that give the wind such a hold on us that I thought my child would be an orphan and ma could forever bring him up wrong, for we would soon be blown off the edge and into an arroyo, which is Spanish for place-where-a-river-ought-to-be-and-sometimes-is. At least I called the first two we crossed that, but later learned to refer to it properly as a wash.

Well, pretty soon the thing which was supposed to be a road took a turn and with a sudden dip, with, of course, no danger or caution sign, as that is one thing the West does not as yet grow—well, the road took it, and down we went into not alone a wash but into a flock of not over five or six thousand sheep, including a black one. No, I don't mean hundred, I mean thousand. They filled that wash from edge to edge. They stood on places that couldn't be stood on; they blocked the road and filled the sky line and baa-ed in every voice from the big buck's tenor to the deep bass of the infant sheep. And they had no sense, but run in front of us, or up out of the way over places that was so

Digitized by Google

steep you would of thought they was flies. On the top of the wash stood the shepherd, his cloak sweeping forward in the wind, his head bent, his staff held like—oh, just like the pictures in the Bible! There was all about us a storm not only of wind and sand but of sheep—sheep, sheep everywheres! And yet they say there is a shortage of wool. I don't believe it! I believe they are leaving it stay on the lambs for higher prices, that's what!

Then as suddenly as we had plunged into the crowding confusion of that first deep wash we plunged out, leaving the herd behind, a melting mass of shapeless objects that in the distance looked as if the round dried bushes of the plain had come to life and started revolving. And the storm died down, too, as if a window had been shut on it, and at the same time we struck Lamar and realized that we was in Colorado.

We realized this principally because of being suddenly upon a concrete example of what a road should be. I mean to say, it was a concrete road and a bear! We could hardly believe it. It didn't seem right, somehow, to ride so smooth and easy and fast. It wasn't natural to go over fifteen miles a hour, and we kept grinning at each other and saying how long will it last? Don't crow too soon, kid, this must be a dream—what is this, a road? And so forth and ectera, kidding each other along and never dreaming it would last.

But it did. It lasted so well that we got into this La Junta place, which was not, as I had expected, made up of cigarettes, patios and guitars, but a big railway junction, at noon time. So we spotted a come-and-get-it shack, and having got it, started for the country where the grades and the price of gas at the same point begin to get steep.

All the hot afternoon we traveled, passing principally prairie dogs, which are hard to pass at first because they are so cute and tame. And they are tame because they

Digitized by Google

know darn well you can't catch them, even if they let you come real near. They are like little decent humans, so respectable and prosperous and inquisitive. I would of loved to take one home for a pet to Junior, but gave it up after the fifth attempt, and realized it would be more worth while to take him something he could really use and have in later life, and was easier to catch, like a Indian blanket or something.

Well, on and on we rode through herds of prairie dogs and herds of cattle, and what they eat is a mystery, or drink either, for you can't see a thing. But they must, because they are all fat and healthy. But no food was kept for them in the ranch houses—that's a cinch, because these were so small the rancher could just about get in himself, and that was all. All until late in the afternoon I looked across the nothingness and saw what I thought was a gigantic cloud resting on the edge of the earth. It didn't shift the way a cloud does, but the nearer we come to it the larger it grew, and other shapes sprang up like ghosts behind it. Then the sun reached a long finger through the clouds and touched the top of the first gigantic shape, turning it red gold. I give a kind of gasp inside myself and seized Jim's arm, the electric thrill going from my hand into him, too, I guess, for he made a funny little sound.

"The Rockies!" I says. "Oh, lookit!"

And I was right. We got out the road map, and sure enough they were! You could tell by the markings where it looked like a woolly caterpillar had been walking around the names of some of the places—Thatcher—Erie—Trinidad. Then we could see three sister peaks, lower and nearer than the others, but high enough, goodness knows, and making me laugh when I remembered the Alleghanies.

"Jim," I says, "have we got to cross them?"

Digitized by Google

"You said it!" says Jim. "Unless you want to turn around and go home!"

"But we can't cross 'em!" I says, feeling weak in my middle. "Nothing could cross 'em—they're too high! Suppose the bus won't take the grades!"

"Oh, I think it will," says Tom. And somehow I had more confidence in his opinion than in Jim's. It seemed more professional, and, besides, I wasn't married to him—and any married woman will know the feeling.

"Well, I don't know that I mind going up," I says. "But think of coming down! Do you believe the brakes will hold? Oh, just suppose they don't!"

"They won't!" says Jim, and for once Tom agreed with him. "Can't use the brakes at all on the sort of stuff we will find over there."

"That's right!" says young Westman. "And probably we'll have to readjust the carburetor to get through the altitudes."

"Can't we go around them someways?" I says anxiously.

"Nope!" says Jim with a strange relish—and I'll tell the world it's his actually liking to take risks is what makes him screen so well in them. But not so sister!

"Oh!" I says. "And I thought this was going to be a pleasure trip!"

"It is, but it's not a kindergarten outing," says Jim. "Believe me, crossing this man's country is no hardship, but it's no cinch, neither!"

And at that time I didn't, as the poet says, know the half of it! All I thought was that somebody had ought to of invented asbestos brake bands, or some kind that would not burn out, no matter where a person took their car, and that I would wait to cross the continent a second time until they had been invented, and also self-adjusting carburetors and automatic accident preventers of some kind. But in the meanwhile all these thoughts of mine,

Digitized by Google

including best wishes for the future and dreams of home, baby and ma, and a solemn wonder as to why had I wanted to Americanize the country anyways when I couldn't find anything to work on and ectera, didn't keep them mountains from coming nearer—or rather from our coming nearer to them.

Yet it's a funny thing, but in a way the further we drove according to the speedometer the further away those Trinidad mountains seemed to be. No matter how we twisted back and so forth, over hill and down ditch, through ranches with trees on some of them now, and trees we could recognize—almost; Christmas trees, and I think maples, but I don't know is that really the right name, never having, like a boob, taken trouble to learn these things at home.

But we got a more homey feeling here, for all of that, and the grandeur of the mountains that was so impressive when we saw them a long ways off lessened as we actually got in among them—we couldn't see the mountains for the hills, as somebody has so truly said. But to sniff in the air was like drinking wine. It made you tingle all over, and impatient because the bus didn't go faster. And then we started going down. Not such a steep incline, but a endless one, going around and around in circles, like we were slowing up on the inside of a vast autodrome. The night came down upon us as if somebody had turned off the switch—the sudden way it does out there in the Rockies. And far below us the lights of Trinidad twinkled, as distant and apparently as unreachable as a perspective city on the back drop of a stage setting, the great electric sign with the city's name in letters of fire blazing now above us, now in front and again behind us as we dropped down and down to the city itself—only in the end to get there after all the American-plan dining-rooms was closed, and we had to eat

Digitized by Google

at one of those places where they have what are called short orders but which take so long, if you get me.

After which there was nothing to do except buy twenty post cards of Kit Carson's statue, mail them to the folks as a quietus to the conscience for being too sleepy to write a real letter, and able to think of nothing to put on the postals, either, except "Lovely weather here, fine trip, wish you were with us," which we had already written to them on the soldier's monument of about ten other places. And while Jim and myself were doing so in a drug store, which also supplied ink, in came Tom, and I noticed he picked out not Kit Carson nor even a Wild Buffalo, but a card with a blue butterfly sitting on a gloved hand with also some silver snow and To My Fair One on it; but of course I passed no remark, because I was getting real fond of the boy.

And so Jim and I merely said: "Six sharp to-morrow morning, Tom, because we want to surely get started by nine. This time you won't have to wait for us. Good night." And so to bed.

Next morning we were up early and started almost on schedule—a thing which a person who has made this trip will have a hard time to believe, but it is true just the same, and partially due to the climate which had filled us full of pep. You got to hand it to Colorado on roads and pep, two things which goes well together—compliment each other, as my synonym book says. And by the way, until I bought that book I always thought that a synonym was a Jewish church. Gee, but I'm getting educated a lot!

Well, owing to the above-mentioned pep and good roads, I decided that this was a swell day for our little mother to drive, I having done nothing so far in that line except sympathize. So I hopped into my riding clothes and also the driver's seat, and allowed Mister Fixit, the smart-Aleck in the new Colby-Droit, to dash off ahead of me from in

Digitized by Google

front of the same hotel, where he had told Jim in the barber shop he had arrived a day ahead of us. So I let him keep that way, as each time we had met him he had been a road hog, and would edge you off the ocean in his boat if he could, and why not let him go if it gave him any satisfaction, because anybody knows that while these new Colby-Droits are very snappy they undoubtedly made a better bus back two years ago when we bought ours.

Well, anyways, I let him go, and also a family of two sons and their mother which we had become intimate with through having waved several times on the road since leaving Thatcher, and we now felt them old friends; but we must part, because they were going northwards to Pueblo and Pike's Peak. So we waved them farewell, wishing it was possible to have Pike's Peak and El Paso thrown into our own route, because a tourist's eyes are always larger than his allotted mileage, if you can understand what I mean. And then at length, having stalled all I could, and having no excuse left for not starting off down that terribly steep street, and a little nervous, I threw off the brake, and without stepping on her teased gently into second, and we was off for a pass called Raton but pronounced Ratoon.

Well, up to this I had an idea that a pass was something that the railroads had stopped issuing. But it seems there is still another kind left, and that this was one of them. Though where they get that pass stuff is more than I know, because pass is about all two cars can do on it, even though the pavement is simply elegant. But a pass ought to mean a place which is cut through like a open tunnel—a place to pass through—a opening, or cleft, as the book says, not a roller coaster without fences and a drop of thousands of feet or maybe miles, for so it looked, on one hand or the other, depending on whether you are coming up or going down.

Digitized by Google

It was beautiful, though, and looked dangerous—more dangerous than it really was. You shoot up into it directly out of Trinidad's steep and shining streets, and right away the evergreen trees begin—and the sudden, abysmal views, if you are a good enough driver to be able to look at them. The earth seems to be split apart for miles deep and the opening powdered with the evergreens, which way down there look like tiny ferns. The cliff is most of the way on your right going up, and naturally the person on that side has a right to hug it—to stick right by—while the poor devil that is coming down has to take the outside edge by the sheer drop into lots and lots of view. I guess those views are inspiring. I heard afterward they was, but at the time I didn't really know; I was too busy with the bus and trying to keep from sliding off into one of them fair landscapes. I know it was like all the picture post cards of it, and then some; that you could see practically all the U. S. A. from the top, but it meant nothing in my young life. All I thought of was, is the edge really as far away as I know it is, and can I behave accordingly?

Of course, the boys asked was I nervous and wouldn't I let them drive, and I said no, not going up. I was all right going up, but at the summit I would let Tom take it, and I would then admire the view coming down—the view of my future life. And just after I said this, believe me, something happened!

We were nearly at the top, and had come to the only part of the road which wasn't in perfect repair. Maybe there had been a landslide or a strike among the road barbers, I don't know which; but I do know we come to a stretch that was rough and very narrow. Two cars could barely have passed without one of them backing up or down, as the case might be, and waiting for the other. I was driving close to the cliff, approaching a curve and

Digitized by Google

thinking my heaven what would I do if somebody comes around it—when they did!

It all happened so quickly that it couldn't happen any other way than it did. Without blowing their horn, around the curve on the wrong side of the road and hugging the cliff came a big red car with two men in it—the two bulls to whom we had given the slip at Kansas City. The man driving give a yell and threw his hands in the air off the wheel, while the other one stood up with something, I don't know what, in front of him. Their car was completely out of control. There was only one thing left for me to do and I done it.

I stepped on the accelerator as hard as I could, and with a strength I didn't know I had swung my car across in front of them toward the outer edge of the chasm.

Digitized by Google

XII

THE bird who said nothing is impossible said a mouthful, because it was impossible for me to pass that big red car on the left without going over the cliff—and yet I did!

Speed was what done it, sheer speed and a good steering knuckle that let me swing by that other bus and keep going. I swear that our two left wheels was on a piece of ground of an angle of about sixty degres for nearly two seconds, and then somehow my heart was back in place, and so was the car—by a miracle. I don't want to be any nearer to death than that, however, until I get ready to die. Talk about drowning showing up your past—well, it has nothing on skimming the top of the Raton Pass on the wrong edge. You see things in your mind that you haven't thought of for years, and hoped you had forgotten.

Well, we got back on that road—actually got back—and for a while—it was only a few minutes, I guess, but I couldn't possibly tell how long, because it seemed like years—all I could do was keep on driving like a crazy person, reaching the summit and diving down the beginning of the descent.

"Holy Barney Oldfield!" I heard Tom Westman yelling from the back seat, but it seemed like a voice from some place in another world.

Close to my ear Jim was saying something very cool and steady, and, thank heaven, not losing his head and trying to grab the wheel or anything.

"Good girl!" he says. "Good girl! Take your foot off the accelerator now and try if you can go into low!"

Digitized by Google

"I can't!" I gasped, wishing I had only had the sense to stop on the level summit, but like a regular female, while I had been O. K. in the actual emergency, I was now thoroughly scared and come pretty near to losing my head. If only I had stopped back up there! But I didn't think quick enough. And now we was going downhill like a crazy thing, with that heavy car, of course, gaining speed from its own weight every moment.

"You must go into low!" says Jim's voice in my ear again—very quiet and compelling, like my conscience was speaking to me. "You must!"

Well, I tried—sort of automatically—while we flew around curves the like of which I had never before even dreamed of. And "dreamed" is right—that's what it seemed like, for the road begun to twist and double on itself and loop around as though it had been laid out for a grim joke—only now it was smooth and broad and clear.

Well, listening to Jim, I tried to go into low. But at first all I succeeded in doing was to get into neutral, and then of course we was coasting. The brakes might of been made of water.

"You must!" says Jim again, and by some miracle, his will helping me, I did actually get into low. We commenced to slow down, and then just at the foot of that awful mountain, on the outskirts of the little town of Raton, I managed to stop, and trembling and damp all over put my head on Jim's shoulder and cried and felt better and let him take over the wheel.

"I guess," I says, "that is all the driving I will do for to-day."

"I guess so too!" says Jim—and a lot of nice things as well about how good I was. And never mind them; what I done was more instinct than brains.

"I wonder hadn't we better go back and see are those fellows all right?" Jim says.

Digitized by Google

"Not much!" I says. "There's nothing wrong with them. There was nobody behind me, and they had the whole advantage on their side. All they had to do was keep on going, and if we go back we will only be inviting ourself to jail!"

"Good Lord, was it them bulls?" says Jim.

"I'll say so!" says Tom and me in a chorus together.

"Good night!" says Jim, and with that he stepped on the Colby's tail and we took a jump due west without further hesitation.

Well, off we went then, through the view that we ought to of been looking at from the top of Raton but had no time for. Somehow I could now look at it with sharper, keener eyes because of having so nearly fallen into it, and of course I would then have missed it entirely, if you get me. So I sat close to my husband, still pretty shaky, and feeling mighty close to him in the other sense, too, the way a woman does to her man when they have just shared a danger or paid a big bill, or some such crucial thing. And while he drove I relaxed and admired the great gray-and-purple mountains which loomed up on either side of the wide, wide valley—such a wide one that some of the cattle ranches in it have aëroplanes to do their fence ranging in—no kidding, the ranches are that big and that modern. Well, the mountains looked bigger and more beautiful than I had expected—and I had expected a lot at that! But somehow they hardly seemed real.

Neither did these big ranches I am telling you about, because they was so vast and endless that you would never take them to be ranches at all, but only great plains, until once in a while you come to a place where there was a funny combination gate in a fence that stretched across the road; one part that had to be opened for horses and the other part open all the time, but with iron bars across the bottom of a deep trap that I guess cattle would not

Digitized by Google

cross of their own free will any more than a lady will cross a similar place over a cellar in a N. Y. sidewalk, especially if in high heels, and I expect hoofs have the same effect.

Well, anyways, we just went on and on through these ranges endlessly, the color on the high points of the Rockies changing with the sun in the beautiful, unreal way they do, and their tall shadows reaching out over the parched pasture lands where once in a while you could see a big herd of cattle like a rust patch on a far part of the distance.

The road was awful to begin with, but got steadily worse all the way through New Mexico, which we were by now in that state. One place we didn't know which way to turn because three equally bad roads forked away with a look of all of them leading to the jumping-off place. And so Jim stopped the bus and I got out to take a look at a funny sign I saw that was shaped like a bell.

"El Camino Real," it says on the bell, and then a little inscription below on a plate. It made me quite breathless to read it, and I scrambled back beside Jim all excitement.

"To the left," I says, "by that bell. Say, Jim, this road was built by the Spaniards over three hundred years ago!"

"So that's what ails it!" exclaimed Jim. "Caramba! It's time it was rebuilt!"

Well, besides those vast, wonderful mountains which you could admire when you didn't have to keep your eyes on the road, the most noticeable thing in this part of New Mexico was the price of gasoline. It was undoubtedly affected by the altitude. Anyways, whether that's scientific or not, it's a fact that gas jumped from thirty-four cents at Raton to forty-five at Las Vegas, New Mexico, and it went higher farther on.

Outside of the near-accident on the pass, it was a kind of uneventful day until we reached a place called Wagon Mound, and there we bought gas again, and paid forty-one

Digitized by Google

cents for it. What is further, we bought it off an old man who had come that far from Maine in a oxcart train years ago. I guess the wagon he was in dropped to pieces there and a mound had grown over it, and that's how the place come by its name. He told us in a real Yankee voice that he had come to find gold. Well, he was finding it now all right, all right. We give him some of what he was looking for, and so did—I am glad to say—that Smart Aleck in the new Colby-Droit, because as usual, though he had dashed ahead, we had caught up to him by now, as also had the Peterkins, who, even though they was eight of them, seemed to make awful good time in that flivver, and really if I was going across again I believe I would go in one of them instead of in a car!

Well, anyways, we left Wagon Mound together, Mister Fixit dashing ahead of us as usual, and us allowing him to, and he as optimistic as ever. And then we and the Peterkins set off together, all unsuspecting of what lay ahead.

One thing we did ask them, and that was did they see anything of the big car on the Raton, and it seems they had met it back in Trinidad, where one of them had told Pa Peterkin all about the narrow escape they had. He didn't know, however, was they coming along on or not. We told him nothing about who they was or anything, except, of course, about how it was us that nearly hit them. But while I wished them bulls no good, still at the same time it was a relief to know they hadn't been hurt except in their nerves, and it had rather been on our conscience, not going back and seeing if there was any pieces to pick up.

So we set off quite cheerful, including Tom, who somehow just couldn't seem to make the Colby go fast enough to get away from Alma, and if ever a girl was well chaperoned I'll say that one was, especially as they had by now found a stray cat somewheres and added it to their flivver,

Digitized by Google

because I suppose they discovered they had a little room some place and naturally didn't know what to do with it.

Well, for the first few miles we only struggled through mud two feet deep along the railroad track, which was nothing to speak of, because, believe me, by now our middle name was Mud, and we snuggled right down into it and wrestled along like the couple of experts we was; not even minding when a freight train on the Santa Fé tracks come along and raced us up a big grade. We raced, I say, but the same as a couple of turtles in the old story, with the engineer leaning out of the cab window and kidding us.

Well, that was all right; but when we left the mud and pools of old rain and struck, as it were, inland—oh, my gosh! Up to then I thought I had seen bad roads, and so I had, it's the truth! But here all of a sudden was no road at all. Actually it is a fact! From Springer on, for fifty miles, it is positively the truth that there is no road—only a rolling country covered thick with what looks exactly like coal-black petrified sponges, but is actually lava rock, and you have to go over a extinct volcano by a mere trail that you can hardly see.

Listen, boys and girls! There is volcanoes on North America! There! I betcher you didn't know that before! And I didn't know it either until I bumped into one and then bumped over what it had once spit up, which is the aforesaid petrified sponges.

As for which way to go across this awful but still somehow wonderfully impressive wilderness, why, only for the sun and once in a while a Santa Fé trail marker you wouldn't actually know which way to go, much less dare turn and try to go back. And all of this in a heat of goodness knows what temperature, but it was enough—I'll say it was boiling!

"Say, Jim," I says at last, "where are we headed for across this no-man's land?"

Digitized by Google

"Las Vegas," says Jim.

"Lots vaguer!" I says. "This is vague enough for me —I don't want it any vaguer!"

But we had to keep on going—there was nothing else to do. And when you got used to it you begun to see a strange beauty in it, too, especially in being so fearfully hot yet seeing the snow-capped Sangre de Cristo range of mountains far away in the distance, with that queer near-farness or far-nearness that mountains have out there.

And then around four P. M., when we had just about decided we was lost in a part of the world that God had forgot to finish or had been too tired to bother with late Saturday night, another tourist actually come in sight—I mean coming towards us. He was a fierce man with a athletic mustache that jumped around when he talked, and a tired wife, and lots of bundles and et ceteras and a Dakota license in a little old roadster.

He give us a hail, and we stopped for one of them exchanges of gab that get to be the regular custom among us new sort of gypsies.

"How's the road ahead?" he says, leaning anxiously out over his steering wheel.

"Watter you mean, road?" says Jim.

"Oh! So it's as bad as that?" says the bird. "Well, it couldn't be worse than what is ahead of you folks. There is a hellofa canyon and some big washes—look out for the one just beyond Canyon Diablo—the bridge over the river is pretty near gone and one car was stuck there when I come by!"

"Thanks!" says we. "Good luck!" And he says the same, but neither of us seriously hoping for it, and off we went again, with Grandma Peterkin, that was kind of feeble-minded, starting to cry.

Well, Devil's Canyon was a good name for that place all right. It come without warning. The surface of the tree-

Digitized by Google

less plain just stopped, that's all, and we went helter-skelter down a steep, winding grade covered with loose stones, and with the rocks above and below us jutting out in strange shapes, like fantastic buildings had been started there and then been left half finished and forgotten. Out we dashed again, leaving the terrible volcanic rock behind now, and coming onto something that faintly resembled a road. But such a road! Evidently it had been raining ahead of us again, and gullies that looked as if they had been put there on purpose crossed it, and we was supposed to cross them on little bridges, which we did by rushing them, but they hardly held us. Believe me, it was some exciting ride!

Then we plunged down into a second canyon—a smaller one this time, with a few tortured, twisted evergreens trying to grow in it, and there we seen what Dakota had meant. The earth around the approach to the bridge on our side was pretty nearly washed out. The Peterkins, who was ahead of us, didn't realize this, however, but made a rush for it and got stuck halfway—sort of with their forepaws resting on the bridge and their hind quarters on the road, if you get me—their differential having come into argument with a plank and refusing to go.

Well, we waited behind them, while they buzzed and buzzed and tried to back off and couldn't. And so finally they all got out and just simply lifted the flivver back where it belonged on the road. But none of us cared to try that bridge again, and so we took the ford instead, there actually being water in this river for once, and Tom was real brave and walked across first to see how deep was it, and found it wasn't, and that the bottom was all rock. So then, as I say, we done our first fording—and got quite a kick out of it, I'll say—and when we had got on the other side Ma Peterkin held us all up.

"Wait!" says she, and so we waited, and ma went

Digitized by Google

around to the other side of her car and took off her red flannel petticoat, not alone on account of the heat, but so as to pin it onto that dangerous bridge, which she done with two safety pins she found some place on the kids, and the handle of a busted jack made a pretty good pole.

Then Jim took the lid off my hatbox, which was busted anyways, and with a little axle grease wrote a sign—"The River is Safe to Ford"—and stuck it where it would do the most good, and then we went on our way rejoicing, and feeling my, how considerate we was and what a lot of good we done for humanity—you know the feeling—consequently in a very good temper.

Also, the road got slightly better, or at least recognizable as such, and led us down into a beautiful oasis all willow trees and fertile fields, with a ranch house as pretty as a set, built years ago by Mormons, and the ranch belonging to it had seventy-five thousand acres! Think of it! It's true! And then when we had a drink of water there we passed along out of this miracle of green coolness and come into Las Vegas, a big mining town, where I again saw the exact hat I was wearing in a milliner's window, and where we spent the night.

I mean we spent it in the town, and in also as good a hotel as we had struck so far out of Kansas City, and we had struck all of them that lay to the east of us. But Tom said no he thought he would not eat with us to-night. He had some place he wanted to go, and it was to the municipal camping grounds; and of all things, he took Alma to see a picture of me that was then showing at the Gem!

But Jim and I didn't go into the theater. Instead we took a look at the shop windows, where he bought a couple of his favorite collars, and if I seem to keep repeating that you can get anything you want any place in America it is merely to point out that we have no downtroddenness

Digitized by Google

nor real poverty, or why should there be the demand and supply of these things from one end of the country to the other? And no matter what day of the year Mr. Trotzky was to come over here, it would always be the first of April for him!

Well, anyways, nobody tried to pinch us here, and so next morning early we stopped by the free camping ground, where dozens of cars was huddled together much like the old wagon trains must of at night, and picked up the Peterkins, because we was by now getting used to them, and Ma Peterkin had invited us to lunch in the public park at Santa Fé.

Well, we had the appetite for it, all right, when we got there, for it is some ride through the mountains and the Santa Fé Canyon to the ancient town of that name! Wild, and just nothing but mountains, mountains all the way—twisting, turning and always climbing, endlessly going up on a gravelly, awful dangerous road that certainly had ought to be a one-way affair, especially as there are three roads going from Las Vegas to Santa Fé, and all of them bad and steep, and you got to watch your engine and your step.

But it was almost the most beautiful country yet, with forests of these here strange twisted, stunted cedar trees all over it, and growing in loose gravel that didn't look like anything could live in it; but these trees did, and also big flocks of fat goats, and also even fatter prairie dogs by the million, and it's a mystery how they do it on the diet and remain so stout.

Jim stopped to ask the goatherder why, but he only spoke Spanish, and didn't savvy, and Jim said no wonder, he's a Mex! And Jim, it seems, speaks only a pure Castile Soap Spanish unfamiliar to the unwashed Mexican.

The grades was awful, and twice we had to stop and help the Peterkins lift their fliv over a thank-you-ma'am at the

Digitized by Google

top of a mountain, but by noon we really did come into Santa Fé—an old, old, beautiful town, a wonderful location for a costume picture, and if we had realized how interesting it was going to be we would have fixed it so we could of stayed there longer. We come into it down a narrow, cobbled street with high old garden walls made of adobe on either side, and old churches that look like they had been there since the Year One, and some of them have been since 1582. Then we come to the square where there are more old, old buildings, one of which was the Spanish White House in the early days before this part of New Mexico decided it would like to take out its first papers. Jim thought these buildings was awful cheap to be palaces, and why didn't our present Government put up something dizzy and new instead of copying the old styles which, it seems, were invented by the Indians. But I didn't feel like that at all. To me they were beautiful—like a rich, plain dress made without any regard to fashion on a vivid woman, they fitted this vivid land and became it as nothing else could. They belonged. And when you feel a thing belongs it's O. K., and don't start trying to improve it.

In a way, it was hard to realize this really was in America, what with palm trees, strange flowers and prickly plants falling over the plastered garden walls and spreading gorgeously in the park, where we ate Ma Peterkin's very good lunch shamelessly from a basket. The crooked streets, the vivid yellow adobe houses, the hot, clear sun, the mules and the signs in Spanish—it was all foreign and queer. And the only thing made you realize it was America was the American Indians, of which quite a few was around and acting perfectly natural and as if there was nothing queer about their being there at all, but the green beholder feeling it mighty queer for all of that.

I think these was Prehistoric Indians, because we heard there was some awful interesting Prehistoric Indian dwell-

Digitized by Google

ings just outside of town; but I don't know, they might of belonged to some other tribe. Anyways, we bought some post cards of them in the drug store, and wrote fine trip wish you were along and mailed them, and then we had to get started, because we had wired Albuquerque for rooms that night, and we would be behind our schedule if we didn't put some pep into it, and I hated to delay, because once I make up my mind to make a place I want to make it. But even so, we was sorry to leave that enchanting, impossible Santa Fé town—and I'll say that if we had known about the La Bajada grade we would of been even sorrier.

Well, that grade was all right when it was built way back in Archælogical times, which are of course times that date way back to the Ark. Because in those times mountains was for Arks to land on, not for cars to pass over. Also it was O. K. for the Spaniards to tease a mule or so up and down it just after Columbus discovered America and before America had discovered cruelty to animals. Well, believe me, the La Bajada grade is something that if you come out of it alive you are entitled to refer to it as a experience. Coming up to it from Santa Fé is all right. You are merely climbing a mountain with lots of Indians in wagons and other curiosities to divert your attention. But coming down—oh, boy!

I will give you a cold fact. In a sharp descent of one and one-half miles—it was over seven miles going up—there are eighteen hairpin turns on a 30 per cent grade and no side walls.

No, that's no use! I can't convey it! But how'dja feel if your car'd got a long wheel base and was too heavy for brakes, and the turns, hanging over the sheer edge of nothing, were so sharp you couldn't round 'em, but had to stop and back and try again on every single one? View? Who cares for views? The only view interested me was of

Digitized by Google

myself in La Bajada village on the nice smooth level plain below—and of landing there by way of the road and intact! And somehow we did get there safely.

Now we begun to pass little Indian farms, with funny flat adobe houses, white-washed and with strings of bright red peppers hanging outside the door—just like it had been done to please the picture post card man, but real, not fakes, and the way those Indians live every day. Then we went through a pass that really was a pass—because it was a actual cut through some high, granite-looking mountains. We could see it from afar, as the poet says, like a giant gateway, and we come to it over a series of broad washes that would of been impassable if wet. But they was sandy instead, so that was all right. And when we dived into this giant canyon that might of been made by God with one blow of a superhuman ax I got a leave-all-hope-behind feeling, but quite unjustly, for before long we had passed through it over excellent paved roads, just like Raton, and wound our way down into Albuquerque.

Now it is a funny fact, but sometimes when things seem to go the most wrong it is all for the best. Probably some other writer has said this before me, but it is just as true as if it was new, and that is how things turned out about the fact of—in spite of our telegram—our not being able to get into the big hotel and having to go to the American House. Jim grumbled at it, and I was fed up with him the way a woman generally gets with her husband at the end of a long, hard day's trip. So we sat in our room and fought over which route would we take next day—the north one through Laguna, Grant and Gallup, where the interesting things are, or the south one, where the roads was said to be better. And we fought so hard and the night was so hot that even after a walk around the beautiful railroad station with its dozen of Indians and its marvelous shop—full of Indian treasures, where for once we bought

Digitized by Google

something besides post cards, and Tom bought a blue alleged tourquoise necklace from a squaw, although for whom I could give but one guess, and they do go well with red-gold hair—well, I couldn't sleep very good, and so it happened that I got up early next day, before Jim did, and I was mad at him because he had sent a telegram to Gallup to hold rooms for us there and I still wanted to go by the southern route.

Well, I got up and dressed, and while he was in the bathroom, but I with my things all on—and it's the truth, I never kept him waiting the whole trip except a few times—well, anyways, while waiting for him I stood looking out through the Nottingham lace curtains, and there what did I see but the big red car with the two bulls in it, exhausted and dusty and seeming to of been on the road all night, drive into the garage across the way—which was not, I may mention, the one where our bus was.

Then they left their car and staggered over to the other hotel!

Well, I just stood at the window frozen for a minute while I tried to think what to do. And then when I made sure those tired cops wouldn't be back for a little while I did what I had thought of. Saying nothing to Jim, I left the room and walked straight to that garage. There was nobody around but one man, and so I spoke to him, meanwhile spotting where the red bus was parked in a near-by stall.

"Any cars to hire?" I says. The man shook his head.

"Nope," he says. "There's a fair over at Laramie, and you can't hire a car in this man's town for love nor money."

"Too bad!" I says. "But maybe you got some platinum magneto points. They would help me just as good."

"Nothing doing!" says the bird. "Feller here waiting

Digitized by Google

for them now—none in town. We don't handle that sort of thing—have to send clear to Indianapolis for 'em."

"Shucks!" says I. "Then would you mind phoning to the depot for me and seeing what train accommodations I can get to Las Vegas?"

Well, he fell for it, and while he was up in the office doing it I lifted the hood of that big red Mouser and pulled its teeth—quietly, quickly and effectively. In other words, I removed the magneto points, slipped 'em into my sweater pocket and strolled out of the garage at my leisure, after thanking the obliging garage boy for information that I didn't need about the 10:15.

"There!" I thought. "It will take 'em quite a while to find out what ails that bus, and another spell to get the cure!"

And then I rushed for the hotel and give Jim the razoo.

"Shake a leg!" I says. "And make it snappy! We are leaving this man's town inside of twenty minutes, and we're going by the southern route, where there are no railroads!"

Digitized by Google

XIII

IT is true that willful want makes woeful waste on most occasions, especially in the big cities, but willfully wanting to get out of town in a hurry wasted none of our time as we shot out of Albuquerque bound for Socorro, I'll tell the world! There was only one serious question in my mind as we left, which question was, Why hadn't these bulls telegraphed ahead to the local authorities and had us nipped, as it were, in advance? And then it come over me that there must be a reward out for catching us—a money reward which they would lose or have to split with the natives, or something like that.

I felt we would be safe so long as we wasn't in danger of being recognized by any local authorities in the places we stopped at. The birds with the red car would only ask for help as a last resort, being fairly certain to figure on catching us their own selves sooner or later. Later was what I hoped for, and when I thought of the session they would have when they tried to find out what was the matter with their car I had to laugh, because a car is not like a person, and when it has a strange ailment you don't generally look at the appendix first. I only wished I could of seen their faces when they at length discovered what was gone, and I was betting with myself they would take half a day at least to get to it on account of naturally thinking of everything else except magneto points.

Well, anyways, having settled that for the present, and being perfectly willing to live in the present, as the girl said when her uncle slipped her into a diamond ring, why, those bulls was easily dashed out of my mind by our dash-

Digitized by Google

ing across the Rio Grande unexpectedly, and what it was doing up there I don't know, as it ought to of been down guarding the Mexican border. But there it was, having perhaps switched up that way after some bootlegger or something, because they do say it changes its course very easily, and that is not surprising, because it is mostly Mexican, after all.

Well, anyways, we crossed it, or rather the wet spot where it would be after the rains, and I will say that whatever else the Westerners have that's good, they have no rivers, and they ought to see our Hudson or Connecticut or Delaware even just once. It would knock 'em dead!

Across the Rio Grande we come into Isleta, a real, genuine Christianized Indian village, with a old adobe church that has the original, ancient fifty-cent admission charge, whitewashed houses with bright blue doorways with red peppers hanging beside them; and in spite of the color scheme it is much more Spanish-looking than American-looking.

Well, Jim got all excited, and also got out the camera and snook up behind a Indian dame with her young on her back and a blanket on her front and everything, he thinking to tactfully snap this free uneducated daughter of the wilds in her native state and costume all but the shoes, which was tan laced ones, and not let her know it or wound her shy, sensitive, free, wild spirit or anything. And he didn't wound it—not even a little bit! Because when he had snapped the shutter and was tactfully turning away she let out a holler at him.

"Hey, you!" she says. "That'll be fifty cents!"

"Can you beat it?" says Jim after he had paid her, climbing back into the car. "She's got not only cooties, but gimmies!"

And then we showed we could beat it by doing so out

Digitized by Google

of town before any he Indian was to come up and charge us for looking at the view.

I never expected we would cross the Rio Grande at all, but we done it three times in that one morning, on narrow, wooden, rickety bridges with Indians—half-tamed ones—coming over at the same time with carts and horses. And I'll remark right here that I never once seen an Indian driving a car of any kind. They like to see their horse power in terms of actual horses, I guess.

Well, anyways, we kept ducking back and forth over the big river, into and out of mean little Indian villages, over shale roads and between stunted trees. I suppose they call them stunted, because that's what it looks like they were doing—stunts—with their arms and bodies all twisted out of shape. Also it is some stunt, believe me, for a tree to grow in that rock with no water! But the Indians manage to get a little corn out of the ground as well, although not over two feet high, and this shows that there is good in that ground, when stuff will grow in it under the worst possible conditions; and if the w. k. Gov't would give these Indians a little water they would be prosperous farmers.

Well, then we come to a place called Los Lunas, which I guess is Spanish for The Looneys, or Nuts. It is the forking-off place for the two routes—the northern one by Laguna and Gallup and the south one which we was taking, and if a person was to read all the conflicting signs which the chambers of commerce of the towns on the rival routes have put up you would go nowheres but crazy and start running around in circles.

Right opposite to each other are two signs, each one of which says the other way is rotten, with bad roads and bum hotels and dangerous passes, but that their way is perfect and goes through the most interesting places. And the two routes is about a hundred miles apart, and how

Digitized by Google

a woman driver can ever decide which way to turn there is more than I know, because Jim was driving at the time, and he and the police had my mind made up for me.

So we give ourselves a shove to the left down through Belen, and started south over a wild, rugged country where the mountains were like jagged teeth against the sky and the parched plain was strewn with the bleached bones of automobiles—a wheel here, a fender there, or a rib of chassis drying grimly in the sun. I suppose they was the skeletons of cars which had got stuck there when it was all mud during the rainy season. At least I hope they was, because that would be the only excuse for them untidy tourists leaving all that truck laying around behind them. Honest, the worst thing I got against tourists is the way they act like they thought they would be the last person going over a trail or through a forest and so it didn't matter what tin cans and even worse ecteras they left behind them, because of course nobody would ever see them. And if they would only have eyes in the back of their head they would see a big procession behind them that the landscape is ruined for, practically, or would be except that Nature fortunately made mountains bigger than tomato cans and prairies larger than newspapers. But there is no sense in throwing rubbish in the face of Nature. It don't improve it any more than it would any other face, and the Government is not yet in a position to provide a corps of facial massagists for the whole entire map to clean up after campers.

If I personally myself was running Washington I would see to it that all parties about to cross the continent from either side by motor was put through a strict examination to find out did they have decency and intelligence enough always to go to the little trouble that it is to leave a clean camp—to respect the forest's fire-insurance policies, and not to cut down and pull up plants for no reason. And

Digitized by Google

for the ones which was found guilty of violating their oath of outing the punishment would be that they would have to walk all the way from the court where they was tried to Arizona or New Mexico or wherever they left the mess and clean up after themselves! Ma used to punish me that way on a small scale when I was young, and believe me, having to do it even once will learn you, and I am laying in wait for Junior with that same golden ruler!

Well, anyways, these high windy plains with their skeletons of dead autos, and also with here and there a dead steer thrown in to make it look natural, was cold as the mischief, although the southest we had been yet. The noons was hot, but, oh, you night and morning! Actually we would put on our winter you-know-whats and a coat and sweater, beginning with the next day when we left Socorro, a pretty little town with hot springs and a hot little hotel and a hot couple of Hopi chickens in cootie coops and ten-cent pearl earrings and regular Broadway clothes who waited on the table there. Cute? I'll say they were! And even Tom Westman passed a few remarks, which is quite enough to say of them, because he was technically in love, and so, according to the books, he hadn't ought to of noticed.

What a cold, well-aired morning it was, coming up out of Socorro through a high, dangerous mountain pass called Blue Canyon! Up and up we went, but I more accustomed to it now and able to look back at the view without wanting to jump into it. And it was a peach of a view —all barren, jagged mountains, very steep and sharp pointed and filled with blue haze in the hollows. The continental divide, it was.

Say, did you ever see a golden eagle? I don't mean a five-dollar gold piece or one sitting in tragic quiet in a cage at the zoo. I mean on the loose where it belongs. Well, I have. Floating over Blue Canyon, where the sun

Digitized by Google

caught under his almost motionless, outspread wings—the finest sight you can think of. He really is pure gold when he's flying overhead in the sun. Funny thing that looking at a mere bird can give you a choke in the throat like that. My heart sort of stopped with awe as I lay back and watched it out of sight. I never thought a bird would make me feel religious, but he did. I seen why we chose him for our national emblem. He is so calm, free, majestic —so sure. Oh, gosh, words is so cheap!

But I'm glad he was chosen, anyways. Because you know what committees to choose things are. Wouldn't it of been awful if they had chosen a canary?

We had a lot of adventures with animals around here, although one of them we didn't know about until long afterward. Jim had been trying ever since Kansas to get a photograph of a prairie dog, but with no success. Well, this day while we ate our lunch—and cleaned up the papers after us—he went out and set the camera for a time exposure over around a turn where a dog colony was, and left it there while we ate. Then he went back and got it, and marked on the fillum number what it was, and when that fillum came to be developed it was the picture of a bear!

Well, not to get too far ahead of ourself, we stayed that night at Magdalena, a real mining town, with Magdalena's face two miles long on the side of the mountain—if you got a good imagination. And from there we went on through more and more mining country, with holes in the hills where miners or bears had made them, but very different from the Penn coal district, although coal was here, too, and zinc and copper. And so on through Datil Forest, all tall pine trees—fox-trail pines, they call them—and again it was awful cold. Then down into Quemado, where gas cost us sixty cents. It was just a little place—sort of post-office center for a lot of big cattle ranches, and a big

Digitized by Google

ice-cream saloon which had seen stronger days, but not in a financial sense, because it seemed pretty well patronized by cowboys, of which any number was standing around outside at ninety-two in the shade. And they do really wear high-heeled boots and big hats and have no end of impudence, but of a awful attractive kind, and I had a perfect right to notice them after the way Jim had remarked about those Hopi chickens and pretending it was a purely geographical interest! Oh, baby, they was some boys! A cowboy has to be a awful lemon not to attract a woman. And by gollies, don't they know it, just?

Well, anyways, at Springville that night in a clean little tavern run by a German woman who learned her business off of Harvey himself, we had, in the heart of the steak country, a steak that sticks in my fond memory yet. It was not over three or four inches thick, tender as the words of love, cooked to perfection, and as it only weighed around four pounds and was served for three, cost two dollars delivered and war tax paid! This is a great country, and I can prove it, and while there is steaks like that in it there is also hope.

Tom, for one, got a revelation from that steak, and it was a beautiful sight to see him sitting there across the table from us, so melancholy and love sick and lonesome for Alma, who must of taken the northern route, that he couldn't eat over half of the whole entire thing. He just kind of absorbed it, as though half unconscious of what he was doing, and then went out to look the public camping ground over just to make sure the Peterkins were not there.

I followed after a while, just to hang about and watch. The camps in the towns was so interesting, and the further west the more so. Beginning in Kansas, this free-camp-life-in-the-open-air stuff was absolutely canned by mutual consent of all parties, and at dusk they would huddle into not alone the towns, but into camp yards, which was not

Digitized by Google

beautiful wooded dells where the solitary camper's fire winked back at the stars, like you would suppose, but a wooden den, a sort of roofless garage, where often and often the busses would be parked as close as in a regular garage, and everybody camping promiscuously and so close together I should of thought they would be embarrassed to turn over during the night. However, towns and supplies and—of all important things—water was very infrequent and far apart out there, which is probably the reason for this enforced chumminess.

But oh, such a strange mixture would be in those camp yards!

Some were just plain tramps, some were workers traveling from place to place and picking up an odd job. Then right along next to them some nice ladies, all alone together. Then a sick man and his wife and baby, living out for their health. Then a big, expensive new car with a family that was just too plain mean to pay hotel charges, though well able to afford it.

Such a jumble, such a crew! There was only two kinds of people who always seemed self-sufficient and never come into these camps but stayed lonely out on the open prairie—keeping themselves to themselves, as ma says. One of these kind was gypsies—the genuine Egyptian gypsies that thought the rest of us was lowlifes and who wouldn't stoop so low as to associate with mere Christians. And the other was homesteaders with oxen or horses and prairie schooners, of which there are indeed many left, and a lot of them are Mormons looking around for new lands to take up. And whatever you many think of their marriages, you got to hand it to them on their ability to improve real estate.

When you see one of these birds camping at nightfall on the prairie or the desert, his horses hobbled, his wagon looming up kind of ghostly, his fire beginning to leap,

Digitized by Google

yellow in the gray dusk, a woman, or sometimes two or three, flitting silently about, you have a hard time to realize this is 1921 and not '49. And then you see, like we did the next day, a thriving, exquisitely beautiful town like St. Johns, Arizona, a garden town all a-flutter with cottonwood trees, and beautiful, high-class houses, and you realize this is a Mormon town, and that men like that lonely—but not too lonely—camper, come out years ago and caused the desert to blossom like the rose and that he will do the same if you just give him time, why, you commence to tone down your opinions of Mormons—that is, you do if your opinions was anything like what mine was.

I was glad—even after I seen this further link in the wreath of beautiful little cities that stretches from coast to coast—I was glad that Jim was not a Mormon. I wouldn't take a chance on any man not using the excuse, no matter if they do say that is all over with now. It was a great way of developing real estate, but not of developing domestic bliss.

Did you ever notice how religion, no matter of what flavor, will bring worldly results if it is sincere and practiced by a group? Look not alone at the Mormons, but at Christian Scientists, New Thoughtists, ect., and the property they own. Think it over. There's something worth considering. It even works out with plain common everyday Christians if they remember that God helps those who help themselves!

Well, anyways, out of St. Johns we struck into a country that got bigger and bleaker by the minute, causing me to feel full of pep and adventure and also to sing my favorite song that I and Jim used to sing before our dance in the old small-time days, and he now joined me at the top of our voices, as often before on this trip, because that is how the air makes you feel:

Digitized by Google

I am a little prairie flower,
Growing wilder every hour——

We were doing a little close agony over it when Jim interrupted himself abruptly.

"Holy cats, what is that?" says he, taking one hand off the wheel to point, although going down grade, the careless way he will, although I have told him one million times that I don't like him to do it. But husbands have these blind spots in their minds. Jim has also got one about lobster à la Newburg, which in all the time I have known him he has gone on suggesting for supper and I have to again remind him that I hate it. But as long as he had pointed, anyways, why I looked, and then I echoed his surprise, although in more refined language.

For there ahead of us was a series of smooth cone-shaped mounds that were too high for real mounds and too low to be hills. They looked more like enormous ant hills than anything, only the ants would of had to be about the size of automobiles to of made them. And then up spoke Tom out of the depths and mazes of the road map—a junior road map we had bought off a recent garage.

"Say folks, it's the petrified forest!" he says. "I thought we was going to miss it coming this way."

And he and the road map both was right, because pretty soon, at the foot of one of them queer, nightmarish, ice-cream-cone ant-hill formations was a sign, just as casual and common as you please, and the sign says:

TO THE PETRIFIED FOREST

A person gets kind of a shock to see a plain, ordinary black-and-white sign with an arrow on it saying such a thing. It was like seeing one that read "Free Beer; Come In" on Sixth Avenue, it was so entirely improbable. Of

Digitized by Google

course I knew there was a petrified forest, but somehow or other I hadn't actually believed it, and that neat little sign made a wonder of the world seem so casual. But then, judging from many of the ads I've seen, I suppose sign painters get hardened to anything.

Anyways, we followed it, and for a few minutes we couldn't, as the poet says, see the woods for the trees. Because they was all laying down, and of course we was looking for something that stood up, and not for a cross between a lumber yard and a stone quarry.

When we seen that the things lying around us was fallen trees made out of jade and amethyst and coral, or anyways that looked like it, believe me, we hopped out of the old bus and give it the double o!

"Petrified is right!" says Jim, fingering the bark which looked just as natural—honest, you would of thought it was real!

"What petrified it—fright?" says I.

"Don't it look as if it was done on purpose?" says Tom.

"It's got those imitation-flower places on the Avenue skun a mile!"

"It was made by a better concern!" I says. "I wonder are we allowed to take a piece for a souvenir?"

"As there seems to be several thousand acres of the darned stuff," says Jim, "I think we might take a chance. Only leave us take pieces that are already broken off."

Well, we says all right we will, but the trouble was to make up our mind which ones to decide on, because the ground was all over stone chips and twigs, and you keep picking them up and then throwing them away, after, because you see a better one, and so on indefinitely. But at last we thinned our selection down to not over half a ton of the very choicest of our choice, or at least as fine a collection as our time would permit if we was to reach Winslow that night—and a lucky thing we put that time limit

Digitized by Google

on ourselves or we might of been running around that place yet yelling, "Oh, look what I found!" In other words, it was like eating peanuts in a peanut factory, if you get my idea.

But finally we got our souvenirs well hid in the bottom of the boat in case anybody was to see them and take them away from us on the way out, and then we left that strange petrified world behind us, climbing through Holbrook and getting into the town of Winslow, Arizona, early enough so's we could get a wash in one of Thoughtful Fred's bathtubs before eating.

And when we walked into the hotel, all keyed up and looking forward to it and everything, who would we see to our surprise but Alma Peterkin sitting all alone by the door watching it! When she lamped us she jumped to her feet and hurried over to us, her face pale under the gold of her sunburn. Rather to my surprise, it was to me she come first.

"Miss La Tour," she says, speaking low, "I've been waiting to catch you before you could register. I came in here three hours ago to find out if you people had got here yet. And while I was standing at the desk, before I'd got a chance to ask, a boy gave the clerk a telegram. I couldn't help seeing it, and it read: 'Detain Marie La Tour and party.' I thought you ought to know."

Digitized by Google

XIV

A FRIEND of mine that's in the pictures told me about what Al Goldringer says the first time he seen Niagara Falls. It seems they were up to Niagara on a location, and Rosco, that's my friend, led Al to the edge of the big shower and started telling him about it. I don't recall the exact statistics he used, but his line of talk went something like this:

"There's so many millions of gallons of water goes over these falls every day," says Rosco. "And they weigh this many tons. The force could drive this number of trucks around the world so many times and it furnishes that many units of electrical power, and the falls are cutting back so many feet a year."

And so forth and ect. for a long spell while Al listened without a word. Then when Rosco got all through the only thing Al says is, "What's to prevent it?"

Well, believe me, that is the way I felt when Alma sprung her glad tidings. I could just see the cops coming over like a avalanche and no stopping them, and the well-known words of the poet also came to mind, "What to do! Oh, what to do?" I felt like the sow of despond, I'll say I did!

"So you told her?" I says to Tom, and the kid nodded at Alma.

"I wanted to start clear," he says.

"I see!" says I. "But what will we do? We hadn't ought to stay here, that's a cinch!"

"If only there was some place you could disappear to for a few days!" says Alma wistfully. "I think I could

Digitized by Google

head those fellows off. I'd watch for them and spread the news that you had gone on ahead of us. Then eventually Tom could get over into Mexico if he absolutely has to."

"He won't have to," says Tom himself. "If I can just keep them birds busy until I reach Los Angeles I will be perfectly satisfied!"

Well, I give him a look then—a question about why was that so arising to my lips but stopping there. Besides, I was getting the first feeble glimmering of an idea.

"Say, I got it!" I says. "Do you boys realize we have come all this way without seeing a Indian pueblo? And that if we go on from here we will lose our last chance to?"

"Girlie, gimme that road map!" says Jim. "I believe we could go to that one which was the big reason for my wanting to come here by way of Gallup! What was it called?"

"Oraibi," I says, remembering the name very well on account of the fight we had about the route—"where the snake dance was!"

"That's it!" says Jim. "It would be a swell place to disappear to, and disappear is probably what will happen to us if we get lost on that territory."

"Where would we stay?" I says, doubtful yet interested, because, believe me, to see all the kind of towns there are in America except the old original native ones would be pretty poor.

"Oh, I got all the dope at Albuquerque," says Jim, "when I expected to go out. You stay at a trading post or camp out."

"Well, we can't camp," I says. "We got nothing to do it with. But I'll say I'd like to kill two purposes with one side trip!"

"Oh, do go!" says Alma eagerly. "And leave the rest to me! I'll manage, really! And we will wait for you at

Digitized by Google

the Grand Canyon. By the time you people catch up to us I'll have those men well on their way to the coast."

"What say?" says Jim. "I'm game if the rest are."

"Well, I'd sure like to go out and see the noble red man nobleing a little," says I. "Because so far I've only seen him half baked by civilization."

Tom went through a few feeble motions of protest about the trouble he was to us until he seen that it was something we really wanted to do. And after a little session about its being impossible to start out that night, and equally impossible to stay at the hotel, we got Alma into the Colby with us and went to where the Peterkins were camping for the night—not in the regular public camping grounds, thank heaven, but a little ways out of town where they had found a spring.

Well, we put up the curtains and slept in the car. And if you have ever slept in one you will know how glad I was to get up at dawn and make an early start.

Ma Peterkin, who had been merely told we couldn't get in at the hotel, because why worry her, was heavenly to us, and give us the two swellest meals you'd want to see, and how she done it on a camp fire and a gasoline stove is more than I could say, but it would of greatly interested my own ma, whose middle name is Cooking. And while not wishing to slight her food in any way, I will say that eating your breakfast at dawn of a fine morning on the edge of the Bad Lands and the edge of a running board does add a lot to the flavor and you even get a sort of glad, free feeling over being frankly not washed and ect.

Well, anyways, Jim had got some dope on the road from a garage the night before, and so we started right out northward as the sun comes up with a shout of light, and Alma rode with us a little ways so as to talk freely.

I gave her a full description of how the bulls looked, and she promised to send a wire to Winslow addressed to

Digitized by Google

Mr. Henry Brown as soon as it was O. K. for us to come along to the canyon, and we would probably find her wire when we come back to Winslow. Then we stopped the bus and she got out, taking Welcome with her, because he didn't speak Hopi and I didn't want him to get into any Irishman's argument with the Indian dogs and maybe get us scalped or something.

So we said so long and started off, and a good thing that Jim was driving, because Tom couldn't seem to get his head turned around to the front, but kept looking back at the bob of sunshine that was Alma's hair until he could see it no longer or got a crick in his neck or both.

Now I have written some about the East Coast and the reds that bloom there in faint shades of pink like a dye that hasn't taken very good except in a few weak spots. I have wrote, too, of New York City, that great big overgrown jumble of beauty and ugliness, of riches and poverty. I set down some things about its love of show and ignorance of values, and knocked it a good deal the way a loving relation has a right to. I have said a most inadequate mouthful about the magnificent strength of the Middle West, and I have hinted at religion in the grand panoramas of the Far West. But now I realize that I have got to spill a little about art. And I am up against it, because I don't know anything about art. As the poet or somebody says, I know what I like. Also I got more than a suspicion that art and religion have got a close connection to each other in some way.

And by religion I don't mean the early cathedrals and enlarged colored photographs of saints. I mean that the kind of instinctive feeling that come to me just west of West Broadway, and which I call religion, had a ditto mark in the art field. In other words, I saw something in these three days which we spent out on the Bad Lands that

Digitized by Google

I knew that I liked; and if you know that strongly enough about anything, that thing is art, take it from me! Art for you, at any rate. I decided this before I found out that a whole lot of the best brush chasers in the country agreed with me about the Hopis and their reservation.

Well, anyways, this was how I felt from the very moment we got clear of Winslow on our way to see Lowe, the poor Indian, and Behold, his wife. And I'll say the feeling was a surprise to me, because I hadn't expected a place called the Bad Lands to be beautiful. But it was, in a strange way, different from anything I ever saw before.

Now the feller at the garage had told Jim there was no regular road out to Oraibi, but only a trail, and that no whites had been over it in a month, so far as he knew. Not encouraging exactly, huh? I'll say it wasn't! But that shows how much you can tell in advance about these desert trails, which is absolutely nothing, because, like European politics, they change while you are telling about them.

So the garage wizard having foretold that the road would be rotten at best, he was of course all wrong. While it was a mere pair of wagon tracks between the brush, it was hard and firm and smooth, one of the best pieces of traveling we had had so far, with of course the usual bad spots here and there. And while on this subject let me add for the benefit of those who have not traveled over desert roads that the truth about them is that they are good. Unless it is the rainy season, gravel or volcanic cinders, once they are packed down, make swell traveling, and you can go any place on them that is often called and certainly would seem to be impassable. I hate to make this admission, because I feel about the Hopi country much as I feel about my favorite little, as yet undiscovered, new restaurant or about my pet seamstress. I don't want to

Digitized by Google

tell the common herd about how comparatively easy it is to get there for fear that they will rush in and abuse the place, and teach Lowe to overcharge and to wear denim pants and other crimes of civilization.

And now for the art part. At least for Chapter One on it, which begun as soon as we were well out of town, and the light of the sun behind us began to feel its way in among the stubby round bushes that were growing about two feet apart all over everywhere on the flats, to where the plain ran abruptly into a monumental set of high mesas far to the east on the one hand, and into the slope of snow-crowned 'Frisco Peaks way off to the west, or ahead of us into a nothingness which we could not imagine, but which we were going into just the same.

A person would not think there would be color in a enormous stretch of dried bushes growing in otherwise barren, sandy ground—I mean barren except for rattle and other snakes, and kangaroo rats, gophers and prairie dogs. But you don't know the half of it! When the sun strikes it slantingly those dry bushes look like the Bad Lands had been powdered with opals—pink, blue, lavender, sage green—as light as layers of tulle on a ballet skirt! As you come up close this color moves away from you, but always it lies just beyond. It hypnotizes you, sort of, and you ride along in the intense heat that is so dry that you don't mind it, and look out over that sea of opal to 'Frisco Peaks with the snow on them, and you wonder how come it is really you doing it.

Once in a while a Indian, riding silently and sort of drooping on a unshod horse, would pass us and look at us as if we was the curiosities and not him—Navajos, these were, and didn't we get stuck on ourselves for knowing the difference between them and the Hopis? I'll say so! And then after a while we saw a startling sight—a roof! —after more than a hour's driving. Not much of a roof,

Digitized by Google

but still one, and when we come up to it we seen it was a white man's building with windows and a chimney and a nice young man and a funny old Navajo chinning on the steps. I'll say that white boy was glad to see us! He jumped up almost before we stopped, and come down to chin with us for a pleasant change.

"I'm looking for Wilson's Trading Post!" says Jim. "This it?"

"No, this is Blackman's," says the boy, a little disappointed, I thought, that his fellow citizens was about to move on so quick. But he pointed the way real kindly, and consulted with the Indian in a soft, strange language when we asked the question that is ever nearest to the motorist's heart: "How is the road?"

"Go along the main trail," he says, "until you come to a fork. One says to Leupp. The other one is to Wilson's. Then Bill he'll tell you how to go from there. The bridge is down, but you can ford the Little Colorado—a wagon did it yesterday."

Believe me, that made me feel real Wild Western all right, as we filled our desert water bag and set off again! That and the scurrying kangaroo rats, with black and white fur; and even in that heat I couldn't help but think, "My, wouldn't a muff of them look good with a black velvet dress!"

Well, anyways, off we went again into the nowhere, and stayed there, traveling under a sun which gradually toward noon dried the color out of the brush, until we come to the fork, and acting as directed took the right and presently were on the banks of the Little Colorado.

Well, I'll tell the world I never thought we could do it when I saw that ford! Down the steepest, muddiest bank probably in the world, and over a sort of double river, with apparently no bottom to it, except where it humped up into a sand bar that we also had to cross. The only

Digitized by Google

thing give us any courage was that there was wheelmarks on the other bank. This was no fake like the other rivers we had met, and had not alone water in it, but muddy water.

"Oy, gevalt! We'll have to rush it, that's all!" says Tom, who was by now being let drive again. And so we sat tight, and I closed my eyes in the true womanly way and we rushed her. I won't forget the gurgling sound the old bus made going through that river in a long time! But we made it, and after a struggle we got on the trail again, and I was free to look around for more art.

And I saw it! Out of the horizon line had sprung an endless red mesa; a solid wall, hundreds of feet high and the color of old-fashioned fuschias—magenta. The opal plain led up to it in a subtle wave of color that I haven't got words to tell about. But I can tell this much: No picture you'll ever see of the Bad Lands can be a exaggeration of its colors, nor yet a true representation of their vivid delicacy.

A person could drool along about it by the hour. But they don't—not if they want to keep their friends. Even friends to the contrary notwithstanding, though, it's an awful temptation to go on. Only, go on is what we didn't do. Because pretty soon we come to Bill Wilson's place —a long, narrow shack completely surrounded by nothing.

I'll bet there are not over six trees on the reservation, and none of them less than twenty-five miles from Bill Wilson's place. There it sits soaking up the sun until it has soaked clean through the roof and into the heart of that man.

When we saw him first he was standing outside the door feeding watermelon to the chickens. He looked up when he heard us coming, but he didn't hurry away from what he was doing. He never hurried, Bill didn't; yet he was one who got countless things done. He was never

Digitized by Google

surprised either; yet he was always open-minded. He had that look of seeing great distances in his eyes that men get out there and nowheres else. The heart of a dreamer showed through them—the heart of a dreamer and the shrewdness of a Yankee.

"Howdy," he said. And we said it, and then we asked the way, and he told us in his slow, mellow accents. With the store behind him, hung with bright beads, guns, tinned goods and so forth, I felt like I was seeing a picture or something.

"How far to Oraibi?" says Jim.

"Oh, about sixty miles," says he. No surprise, see?

"Good road?" says Jim.

"You can make it," says Wilson noncommittal.

Then he offered us watermelon with the same generous impartiality with which he had give it to the chickens, while his pretty wife, a cozy middle-aged woman, come out and listened while he told us how to go.

"Better take along a melon," he says when he was through. And he gives us one—a gift!

I can't hardly tell you how this trader, even after these few words, made me feel; but it was a little the way I felt when I saw the golden eagle.

We left them, then, thinking not to see any more of them. But that's all a person on a journey knows! For hardly had we got two miles away when all of a sudden, without warning we was stuck hard and fast on the adobe shores of a dried-up lake!

Well, it was Illinois all over again, only this time under a early afternoon sun, forty miles from any place and wild Indians all around. All around is right. For pretty soon they actually were, having apparently sprung up out of the sand, horses and all, until ten of them was sitting in a circle watching the Colby sinking deeper and deeper into the mud, and don't tell me Navajos have no sense of

Digitized by Google

humor, for they certainly appreciated our efforts to dig out. But appreciate is all they did, for not one of them even offered to lend a hand. They were a bunch of loafers with fine teeth, but all they gave us was the hoot, and when we asked them to help they wouldn't leave us touch their horses and didn't even answer us back—no, not although when English failed us Tom tried a little Yiddish, but to no avail. I found out then why they call that place the reservation. It is because the Indians is so reserved.

Well, when we was just about exhausted, who like a couple of angels in a flivver should appear but Pop Wilson and his son. They had seen us in trouble with a telescope from their roof and come out to help!

I don't want to say anything more about them folks except this: That I never had help handed out to me before with such quiet generosity; that they unmired us and invited us to stay overnight; they give us bed and board and oil and gas and help and a mighty pleasant visit. And wouldn't take a cent for any of it!

Can you beat that? No, not outside of America! And we was so green, so used to paying through our nose for everything we got, whether satisfactory or not, that at first we couldn't understand it when we left next morning early, and they were genuinely hurt when we tried to pay. We hadn't yet learned that there is still a big piece of this man's country where people help you just because you are in trouble, and where if there is no inn the stranger is the native's guest. It is a kind of customary investment that they make against their own need. Bread upon the desert sands. Do you get it? We did after a while. But it was all done for us in such a fine, unconscious manner that it took a good while to sink in.

And as we drove off with waving and shouting and promises to stop in on our way back I thanked God for Americans like them, and turned my face toward the great

Digitized by Google

curve of the Red Mesa, along whose base we were to travel into the land of sky cities.

On and on we went under the burning sky, past little Navajo tepees, past picturesque Indian camp fires smoldering along the way, surrounded by pale-face soup cans quite, quite empty! For, believe me, the tourists have nothing on the Navajos for messiness, and heaven help a landscape if the both of them get into it!

Past wagon loads of Navies we went, and out along the dangerous edge of the deep Oraibi wash, stopping to eat Ma Wilson's beautiful lunch at Little Burro Springs, where in the shade of three lonesome cottonwoods the water flies out of the rock into what might of been Rachel's well, and where a Navajo woman with three naked babies and a loafer of a husband was weaving a bright blanket, just like the railway prospectus says they do.

Then out of the sharp cool of the shadow once more, and into the blazing sun, along parched ways, where sheep corrals were built into the sides of the yellow cliffs and the stunted farms of the Hopis began. Then the Third Mesa raised its towering head out of the horizon and we sped on to meet it, flinging past a wagon train and through the loose sand that means a village is near, and arrived in midafternoon before the palace of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

I don't need to give any other name. Anybody who ever went near Oraibi will know it, and the ones who haven't been there will get a good idea of what he is like from what I call him. He is the man who has the local trading post, and there was a famous Italian named the same. This Lorenzo's got a dash of Latin blood, too, that makes him all the magnificenter. And when he heard our car he come out of the palace and greeted us. And when we told him who we was he right away invited us to stay overnight or as long as we wanted to—and believe me we took him up on that!

Digitized by Google

I'll never forget Lorenzo as I seen him first—a stout young man with a largeness that was more than his physical largeness about him, his eyes black as sloes, his color high, his poise superb. Living on the desert does one of two things to a man: It makes him mean or it gives him this wonderful bigness, this peculiar brand of poise. And the Magnificent One had it.

His palace was strewn with rugs, the finest I have ever seen. They was on the walls, on the sofas, on tables and on the railings, as well as on the floors. Baskets and pottery were piled in corners, buffalo robes, guns, blankets dangled from the rafters, and in the long dim shop was a treasure-trove that the old Dago Lorenzo had nothing on —no kidding—thousands of dollars' worth of turquoise and corals and silver jewelry, made also by the Indians, were there. And gawdy velvets and plushes and calicoes and heavenly pink pop in shining glass bottles, and tobacco and umbrellas and every darned thing you can imagine was also there, all in an ordered disorder that was gorgeous and interesting beyond anything you could think of. I almost hated to leave when Lorenzo told us to.

"I will wait supper for you," he says. "You folks go along now and see Oraibi—the old one on top of the mesa —and then go along over to Hotevilla. It is the most primitive village in America—just like they were in prehistoric times. It's worth seeing."

Well, I give one look up at that mesa which has about seven thousand feet elevation but no elevator, and I wondered how could anybody speak of going up there in that casual manner. I wondered all over again when we started, too, because beside this trip La Bajada Pass was mere infant's work. Over there we at least had grades, while here the road, or what was called a road, just went straight up, and nobody had worked out their taxes on it recently either.

Digitized by Google

How can I describe old Oraibi or Hotevilla to you? Or will I just lay off it? No, I can't do that, quite, because these cities are as much a part of the wonder of our broad land as Chicago is.

Just imagine, then, a city hung high in the clear air and built out of the yellow rock, so that from below, in the valley, you can hardly tell it from the mesa on the top of which it stands. Really beautiful houses, they are, piled one upon the other, with ladders made of tree trunks with notches cut in them leading to the upper ones; with dried meat and peppers flaming by the doors, vivid, yellow peaches spread to dry upon the roofs, the beautiful people —oh, my heavens, but they are beauties, especially the young women—the people dressed in a bit of bright rag or blanket, for, thank heaven, overalls haven't reached here yet, and the folks mostly go about as is. Then there are sacred turkeys wandering all about the place and Jim says, "Ain't it strange that they think turkeys is sacred?" And I says, "Not much! Remember what we had to pay for ours last Thanksgiving? Of course they are sacred!"

At Hotevilla we stood in one spot on the edge of the mesa where the foot trail leads into the valley, to which the Hopis go every day to work in their fields. To my right was a donkey corral made by the simple method of building a fence on two sides, the house made the third and the sheer drop of the cliff the fourth!

On my left was the head of the trail that wound down to the spring, halfway below, in which one old bird with white hair was calmly and without any embarrassment or bathing suit taking a cold tub. On a projecting rock just below me a woman was taking out the inner workings of a goat with no intention of putting them back. I'll say that goat will never be the same again! And just like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, all down the face of that great cliff, wherever there was even a foothold, were little

Digitized by Google

gardens—beautiful little gardens, some only about as big as a clothes basket, but well planted and beautifully cared for, and how the folks ever got to them without breaking their neck is a mystery. To see the Indians toiling up the long narrow trail past the little hanging gardens, the old man at the spring, the women bringing up water in jars on their heads, and the sunset over all of it—well, oh boy, it was an eyeful, I'll tell the world!

Now what I have put down is, of course, something you have often seen on picture post cards and ect. Probably there is nothing new to you in what I have told. But I am now about to shoot something which had ought to get President Harding's immediate attention, along with the not over seven million other things which also need attending to at once.

We have in our midst, or to be exact, in our Southwest, a people who had ought to be preserved intact as a national monument. We talk a lot about our national parks, and God knows they should be preserved. But when it comes to our national peoples, why don't we try to preserve them? We try to change them, to reform them! It's like trying to bring the ancient temples up to date with sanitary plumbing, elevators and other improvements, and just as sacrilegious. Here we got a perfect specimen of Life as it was in Bible times, and so far nobody but me seems to of realized that they, the Hopis, should be preserved in their own customs, habits, way of living and dressing, without any interference, except maybe a doctor once in a while to keep down trachoma, which is almost the only disease they ever get. They should be preserved and protected as a work of art, so the other, newer Americans can see and know them and benefit by the beautiful pottery and baskets they make.

Now lookit! There are only about a thousand of the Hopis left on their three high mesas. They are hard-

Digitized by Google

working, happy, thrifty and beautiful. They are absolutely friendly except when the boneheaded Government sends soldiers in to take their children away to school by force—to a school, mind you, that they don't like or believe in nor need! If they was mischievous like the Navajos, why that would be something different.

But they are not. They have their own religion, a worship of air and sun and rain and fertility. Why not leave them have it? They invented it a long time before our religion, and they think it good. And if they think it good and it harms no one, why not leave them be?

Now another thing. Why take the young ones by force away to school? What does it get them? The girls get taught cooking and sewing! My heavens, they can learn it better on the mesa! The boys get everything except agriculture. Just think of the stupidity of not teaching a Hopi agriculture—a Hopi, who for thousands of years has made stuff grow where nothing could! What do they want to learn to read or write for? They mostly go right back to the mesa, anyways. They need reservoirs for irrigation far more than they need schools.

What's the good of teaching the girls to cook if they don't give the boys the water with which to raise something to eat?

We got a grand chance to do something no other nation has done if we would only jump in and make a national monument of the Hopis. It's not too late yet. But we ought to get action soon—make it snappy.

The Hopi cuts his hair like a Greenwich Villager, but that is the only radical thing about him. If I was running Washington I would certainly preserve him in his natural state at least as much as the wild game is preserved in the Yellowstone. He is quite as important and a darned sight more interesting and productive!

Well, anyways, we talked this all over and got it settled

Digitized by Google

coming home over the mesa, from which in the sunset the Oraibi Valley looked like a huge hollow of molten gold. Driving down into it was like entering an immense burnished opium bowl. And that night Lorenzo the Magnificent talked the idea over with us, and agreed we had the right dope, and he, being out among these people for two generations, meaning his father before him, and they all love him, ought to know.

We sat in the moonlight and talked. And then after a while we just sat, because the full moon on the desert is like no other moon, and you want to sit in silence and look at it. Such whiteness, such shadows, such a silver radiance—the moon herself seems bigger on the desert. To stand in it is to be bathed in quicksilver. That's how you feel.

I wanted never, never to go home. And the Magnificent One, with his limitless kindness and hospitality would of let us stay on and board free with him forever, I guess, if we had said so.

But like any perfect thing, our stay back in the simple early ages of the world had come to an end, and eventually we had to beat it, hoping most sincerely we can some day go back. Actually as we drew near Winslow I began to understand what Bill Wilson, who lived thirty miles out on the desert, meant when he told us that on his vacation he was going back into the mountains to do some shooting and get away from civilization. And I thought it still when Tom come out of the Winslow telegraph office with a message in his hand and shouting.

"It's all right!" he says. "She's wired that they left the canyon yesterday. Hurrah! Now we can go on!"

And even while he was speaking I saw the big familiar red automobile easing down the street towards us.

Digitized by Google

XV

I WAS glad that the auto is so mobile that it could take me places where the railroads couldn't, and when I saw that big red bus coming at us my first thought was well, let us turn around and beat it back to Oraibi, and on the lonely desert sands let the best car win if they follow us, and if we scalp them out there in the silent spaces, why it will be blamed on the Navajos.

But like most fears, mine got busy too soon, because when the red car come abreast of us, by gollies, it wasn't our red car at all but a much newer model, with a bunch of duck hunters in it on their way to Red Lake out on the reservation, where, strange as it may seem, there are no end of ducks.

And these hunters had with them some stuff which had been perhaps bottled in bond and was rapidly being unbottled in bondage, and it's a wonderful thing, but fishermen and hunters still manage to get it. I have noticed that a good many times.

Well, these birds, far from pinching us, passed right along by singing that well-known old Italian song, "My Marie Hooch, she taka steamboat—she sail away!"

And while they was an interesting sight out in these dry and arid regions, we didn't want to catch them; but with Jim for some reason singing If a Wish Could Make it So! we started carefree and happy toward what had from the start been the real heart of our trip—the Grand Canyon.

It is a mercy that it is led up to gradually. If a person was to have the canyon sprung on them all of a sudden

Digitized by Google

they might die of it. I personally myself don't see how the ones that come on the train from Williams and walk carelessly up to the parapet in front of the hotel stand the shock. It ain't right to ask a person to look into God's studio without preparing them first.

Fortunately for my heart trouble, which I haven't got except when I can't manage Jim any other way, we come by car from just east of Flagstaff through a endless yellow pine forest that was like an ancient temple—you know, one of those temples that you see pictures of in the almanac—seven-wonders-of-the-ancient-world stuff—only this temple was alive. Well, anyways, it give me a sort of proper religious feeling to drive all day between these pine-tree columns, so straight and clean and high, with between them here and there groups of young oaks, their leaves turned to a fluttering mass of bright clear yellow that made them seem just as if jagged handfuls of the sun had been torn off and dropped down into the forest gloom.

Well, this got our mind sort of calm and cooled off and—well, sort of ready. And then, as if to break the news to us gradual, the road left the forest for a while and led across a plateau over the far edge of which, very distant and unreal, we could see the Painted Desert. The chief thing about the Painted Desert is that you don't believe in it, even after you've seen it. Perhaps a person does if they actually go so far—and far is right, it is quite some distance from wherever you happen to be—well, if you go so far as to actually get on it. But to us, trying to reach the El Tovar Hotel before sunset and traveling fast, about thirty miles or so in the distance the Painted Desert was like a mirage, which means something which ain't there except in your own imagination like, say, the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.

It was a beautiful mirage, though, and we got quite a kick out of it. It lay way over there to our right, like a

Digitized by Google

lake of pale opal, with cliffs of pale opal and the milky white jade rising out of it—a dream desert, as delicately lovely and as deadly treacherous as a professional vamp. But seeing first the forest and then this wicked beauty was like walking up steps of expectation, if you can savvy what I mean—with the canyon still ahead of us at the top. Only, of course, when we got there it was way at the bottom. You know, it's a hole, not a mountain.

Well, anyways, we left the mirage and dashed into a royal forest again over perfect roads like a superb private park, the sun getting lower by the minute, and my mind with it, because I wanted to see the canyon for the first time with the sun in it. And then all of a sudden we come on one of them ever-strangely-out-of-place-looking signs which always made me feel that the wilderness was so thoroughly Americanized that it just naturally grew signs in correct language—well, anyway, here where it had apparently grown wild was a sign which says To Grand View. So we went there, and it was.

I will never forget seeing that canyon at sunset from Grand View. But I can't tell you about it. Like my religion, it is none of your business and a private matter of my own. I do think, however, that Jim expressed all our feelings and the feelings of the average person under the same experience when he stood beside me and looked down.

"Holy mackerel!" was what he said. And if you have been there you will know all that he meant by it. If you haven't been, there is no use in my trying to explain—buy a ticket! That's all I can say, except that that's where the saying "A picture no artist can paint" originated.

Well, I don't mind giving out the dope on this place, because no tourists can spoil it. They are just plain swallowed up by it. Let 'em come, the canyon won't even notice it! What is further, it is the one place in America

Digitized by Google

that it is the solemn duty of every American to see. It will sort of fix up and adjust their mental carburetors so that their brain gets the right mixture. It will show them exactly what size they are, and just how big they can grow to be if they are willing to try. If they got any sense of proportion at all it will give them a standard of measurement for a big part of life—including the size of our great country and of their own real-estate holdings, and by no means excluding their immortal soul.

Most out-of-door places which are good for your heart and mind are uncomfortable for your body. The canyon is not. You can enjoy the music of the canyon's silence as comfortably as you can enjoy the music of New York's grand opera. And I'm not at all sure but what you get the full benefit of both when your body is so comfortable that your mind is free to pay no attention to it.

Not that my body was comfortable every day of the four we stayed there, however. Said body was all right as long as I had sense enough to remain on the top edge of that big hole and hang around the beautiful gardens and Fred's best hotel, where he has outdone himself and it don't look like a hotel at all, but like the private hunting lodge of the King of Whatsis in a feature I once made called An American Queen. Some hotel! The only rough thing about it is the logs it is built out of and the sturdy life in the wilds you live there is accompanied by a crude Western sort of service and meals such as you might expect at the Ritz.

Well, anyways, as long as I remained on the top and run no greater danger than what the near-Hopi House offered to my pocketbook, where I almost bought ma a tomahawk and then decided a blanket was safer with her temperament, and a silver ring for the nurse and a rattle for Junior and a string of wampum for Al Goldringer and about two hundred post cards to write pleasant trip wish

Digitized by Google

you were with us on. Well, so long as I did this and hung around and watched the professional Indians shimmy for the tourists after supper, and looked at the canyon every once in a while to make sure it was really the way it is and that I hadn't dreamed it—why, as I say, I was all right and perfectly comfortable.

Things were going nicely in every way. We had seen the Peterkins, who were camping, of course, and Alma told us how the bulls had come by the camp in the big car and seen our hound and stopped, and how she said yes, we had gone on by to Los Angeles two days ago, but lost the dog and they had fallen for it. So everything was fine.

But could I leave well enough alone? Answer: I am a woman—an admittedly womanly woman. And so of course I had to go and get mixed up with those darn scenery-going mules.

Now the rim of the Grand Canyon is not all there is to it—not by any means. There is the below part, and the average, sane tourist enjoys looking at it and gets a lot of satisfaction out of admiring its beauties—the brown snake at the bottom which they tell you is the Colorado River, the Temple of Isis where they get the ice from, the Battleship which you can see as such if you got a marine imagination, Thor's Hammer, which looks like it might throw itself any moment, and so forth. But there is always a mad minority that ain't content with using opera glasses or the pieces of yeggman's lead pipe that are set about here and there as sort of Nature's telescopes or something, and these minorities have a craving to go down and mingle with the scenery instead of merely looking at it from a respectable distance.

Actually it is the truth that the big and most debated question out there is will we go down the trail or will we

Digitized by Google

not go down the trail? All over the place you will hear lines of talk like this being pulled perfectly seriously.

"I'm crazy to go down, but I'm afraid for my heart. My doctor has told me I got to be awful careful."

"Oh, nonsense! I ain't a bit afraid, but I'm not supposed to do any riding."

"I'd go down in a minute if only I'd thought to bring my riding clothes. What's that? You can hire them from the hotel? Oh, but I'm sure they would never have any to fit me."

And a lot of bunk like that. The truth is, you are kind of ashamed not to go down and at the same time scared to death of going. Which to do, go down or stay up, eats into your bean. It's a big question.

"Don't you want to go down?" says Jim with a touch of scorn that hit me right on the raw vanity. Of course I wasn't scared. That wasn't why I had been hanging back. I wasn't scared for myself, but I couldn't help thinking of my duty to my baby and my public.

"Sure, I want to go down!" I says with a sort of forced gayety that I hoped looked natural, but which probably looked it the way a corpse does. "Sure, I want to go down! Leave us go over and talk to the mule clerk about it."

This was in the late afternoon, see, and they date you up in advance. And when we got to the desk who would be there but a charming young widow that I had been noticing Jim noticing, and she had been so far the only drawback to the canyon. And now it seems she was going down and that she and him had already spoken! So he introduced me.

"Meet my wife, Mrs. Miller," says Jim. "Shake hands with Mrs. Miller, Marie."

"So pleased to meet you!" says this blond cat. "I think your husband is such a nice man!"

Digitized by Google

"That's what strangers always say of him," I says very cool. "Are you going down into the canyon?"

"Yes, to-morrow," says Mrs. Kitty Miller, "and I'm scared almost to death. I hope there will be a strong, brave man in the party."

And she give Jim a clinging-ivy glance and the poor fish swelled out his chest under it the way they do. Then she slid off and left us exposed to the humor of the mule clerk.

"How about a little death daring for to-morrow?" says Jim, trying to hide his fears under a bright exterior and I devoutly hoping the party was all made up and no mules left for us. But no such luck!

"Sure!" says the clerk. "Hermit or Bright Angel?"

"Which is the best trail?" says Jim.

"Well, the Hermit is sixteen dollars a head and the Bright Angel is five," says the clerk.

"Gimme three Bright Angels," says Jim. "I'd rather be scared to death for five dollars than for sixteen."

"Is it really awfully dangerous?" I says, just for the comfort of having him contradict me.

"Not a bit!" says the mule clerk. "We haven't killed anybody now for over three weeks!"

"Huh!" I snorted. "The time limit must just about be up by now!"

And then I walked away, because I seen the widow sailing up, and I left Jim have her, because interfering never does any good during these temporary aberrations, which occur in all normal families; and anyways, I wanted to go and get a good look at the beginning of that trail all by myself.

Well, when I stood there and looked down it I see at once why it was named the Bright Angel. It was called so because that was undoubtedly what the first man that went down it saw when he woke up. I give one good look at

Digitized by Google

it and then went right back to the hotel and give the mule clerk some further instructions about my mule.

"I want a good steady family mule," I explained to him. "One which has made the trip often—not more than eleven or less than thirteen times," I says. "And for preference one that has just finished its latest trip," I says, "so it will be too tired to feel gay, yet not so depressed as to be considering suicide. In other words, I want him to be just right. Not that I'm at all afraid," I says. "But I got my public to consider."

"All right," says the mule clerk. "What do you weigh?"

"A hundred and thirty," I says.

"Then we'll give you Napoleon," says the brave muleteer, or whatever his official name is.

And then I went off kind of worried, because his asking my weight was sort of a bad sign, and I wondered how much the average person lost by the end of the trip. But I wasn't through with my precautions—not by a darned sight!

The next thing I done was to get the head waiter to let me have two nice red juicy apples—the handsomest, tastiest fancy table apples, they was. Not that I believe in bribery, but still it does a person no harm to have a friend in the right quarter in time of need, so I took the apples over to the stable and had a quiet personal interview with my mule. I felt it would be a good thing for me in the morning if we had met before and he had got a pleasant impression of me. So I got one of the mule punchers in charge to show me which was Nap and then I and he had a little heart-to-heart talk, during which I slipped him the apples in a unobtrusive way so as not to hurt his finer feelings or make him feel that I was trying to buy his interest.

"Mule," I says to him when sure that we was alone at

Digitized by Google

last—"mule, I want to talk to you as two equals—you and me. I know you ain't a parent, but I am; and just because you are a natural-born bachelor is no reason why you can't respect a mother's wishes. I'm going to depend on you, Nap, to take me down and bring me back whole, and I hope you are going to act like a good sound American he mule and treat me like a gentleman and not pull any of the rough stuff that your famous namesake was noted for with women."

And then when I hoped I had impressed this on him thoroughly but was by no means sure I had, for all he eat both apples without remark, I left him to see could I buy me a couple of rabbits left hind feet in the Hopi House and also if possible a pair of handcuffs to cuff my feet together under the mule's belly. But was in both cases unfortunately out of luck. So I bought a pin and a Indian vase that looked like some Indian had sat on it while it was still soft, instead, because I never could get out of that place without spending some money. And then I felt better. It's a funny thing, but whenever I am kind of tired and nervous if I spend a little money I feel better right away.

But just the same I didn't sleep very good that night. The canyon sat on my chest like a welsh rabbit, if you get the idea, and I kept tossing around and wondering in the wild way a person does in the dark of a sleepless night whatever possessed me to say I would do such a thing. But I wasn't as glad when morning come as a person generally is after not being able to sleep. But of course there was no getting away from morning, and so when heavily urged by Jim I got up finally and put on my riding clothes which I had up to now swaggered around in them a good deal. And then I added my false and hollow cheerfulness to his ditto and we went down to breakfast, which I ate

Digitized by Google

recklessly because of realizing it might be my last meal on earth.

Well, then we went out and got our tickets off the cashier and was politely requested to pay for them in advance. When the trip was over I realized why. It is because they would rather be sure of the cash than be sued for damages, including loss of use of a person's seating capacity, if you get me.

Well anyways, we got and paid for those tickets to eternity, and pretty soon Tom Westman come up, because he was determined to die with us, and he and Jim actually pretended they was looking forward to it. Well, looking forward is what you have to do. There is no use looking back, once you get started on the blame trip.

By now the mule clerk had put on a cap like a ship's first officer and stood at the gangway to the corral with a women-and-children-first expression on his face, and commenced to shove us ruthlessly over to where the mules was waiting with a bored expression on their faces, which was, however, no comfort to me. I give the crowd the once-over and then I got at least one satisfaction. That nasty widow, Mrs. Miller, had on a costume which looked like something the plumber had left the last time he fixed the leak in the boiler. Also, there was Alma in what his helper had left, and a fat middle-aged Irishwoman, Lady Bridget Something, who was all dressed up in the plumber's grandfather's outfit and protesting a lot about it too. Jim had the real costume, and the other men—Tom, a silent fellow with an inquisitive, active camera that never stopped working all day, and of all the people, Mister Fixit, real name of Jones, the 1921 Colby-Droit party—well, they had on merely borrowed putties, being by nature provided with garments that would ride astride of a mule. But of all the women, I was the only one had proper riding clothes, and by that I mean proper in the

Digitized by Google

sense of being correct, but not too proper to be snappy.

For a moment this went to my head, and I thought gee, lookit Mrs. Miller, ain't she a sight beside me? And then a horrible realization come over me and I went right over to the guide, a young cow-puncher by the name of Slim with a pair of female pink satin garters on his sleeves and hair on his chaps but none on his upper lip.

"Say, brother," I says, "don't get me wrong because of these clothes. I got the costume, but I don't know the part. Don't ask me to do any daring feats of mulemanship, will you?"

Well, he give me a slow, amused smile at that and answered in the slow, soft way these roughnecks have.

"Say, marm," he says, "we long ago learned to know that clothes don't make the rider. A guide in charge of one of these parties don't fall for that mistake but once."

Well, the fatal hour had struck, and with, I confess, a beating heart I walked over to Napoleon, a sickly smile of greeting on my face. But all the brute give me was a glassy stare. He didn't even bow—I didn't get even a smile of recognition out of him, or anything. Anybody would of thought we was meeting for the first time. But there was nothing for it except to risk his temperament, because the folks was already riding out of the corral and I at least done honor to my pants by getting onto Nap alone. No sooner had I done so than I was on my way. I hadn't touched the reins nor made a single remark to that animal beyond good morning, but off he went.

"Leave the reins loose! Don't try to guide your mules!" shouted Slim. "Leave them alone! They will bring you down safe! Leave them do it all!"

Behind me, as we trotted out, I could hear Lady Bridget complaining.

"But I must have a sidesaddle!" she was insisting. "I

Digitized by Google

don't wish to ride astride. I'm perfectly accustomed to an English sidesaddle!"

Can you beat it?

"No sidesaddles, marm," says Slim firmly. "This here mule wouldn't know what to make of it. Can't you ride?"

"Of course I can ride!" says Lady Bridget. "I have ridden every kind of creature all my life—including camels. But I always use a sidesaddle. It is the correct way to ride."

Well, I don't know what Slim answered when he was told how to ride, for by now we was trotting ruthlessly to our fate, the narrow top of that trail getting nearer and nearer, and I quickly realized there would be no use trying to persuade Nap to stop or even to hesitate. Where the other mules went, there he was going, too, and I was in the middle of the bunch. Nap was a social animal. He liked to keep up with the crowd. Indeed, sometimes he liked to try and pass them on a curve, which certainly shows nerve at any rate. Also, it takes nerve on his rider's part.

Closer and more fatally we come to the beginnings of the Bright Angel, and never, believe me, did the canyon look as deep or the walls as steep or the rim so good as at the moment when the mule ahead of me just naturally vanished around the first turn and mine followed without hesitation.

"Oh, why did I ever leave the church?" I thought as I plunged to my death over the edge of that two-foot-wide-trail. Only of course I didn't plunge to it at all, but rounded the corner alive and still moving. Then we rounded another corner, with Nap's head sticking out over the edge of about five thousand feet of nothingness, his hoofs slipping and his differential sort of loose-sounding. I hung onto the pummel and shut my eyes, leaving go of the reins entirely, and now I lay me down to sleep,

Digitized by Google

my country 'tis of thee flashing through my brain. And then I opened up again, and saw that we had stopped to get our photograph taken for the home folks to remember us by; and we stopped just in time, as far as I was concerned, because Napoleon had parked himself with his head and one front leg hanging over the cliff. And there I sat with nothing between me and my Maker but a mule, and no wonder I looked like I did in the still the photographer took, and it's the first time I ever had one that I wasn't unwilling should be retouched.

Well, this photographer, which it seems to me he took quite a risk for the money, coming down the face of the cliff to get us, pulled a line of humorous talk about how we was the first party ever went down and so forth, but I was in no frame of mind to see humor in anything.

And when the guide, who took the whole thing with the most amazing calm, says "Yup!" and the mules yupped along again, I don't know did I feel relieved or not.

For one thing Napoleon's wheel base was so long that a part of him always hung out over the cliff on a turn, and the more he done so the less I got used to it. Also, he had some private quarrel with the widow's mule which was just ahead, and kept biting it on the knees. Of course, under any other circumstances I would of been glad, but as it was, for all our sakes I wished he would lay off until they got home to the barn.

The widow kind of liked it, though she kept giving little professional squeals of fright and appealing to the great strong men to help her. Help her, my eye! A mule couldn't scare that female. But he could me. Especially when we rested and Napoleon would lean deliberately way over the edge to see was there any pills on the quinine bushes that grew almost out of his reach.

Digitized by Google

After a few turns, Lady Bridget, the camel rider, give a shriek.

"I've got to get off and walk!" she says. "I must get off and walk!"

"Ho!" says Slim, and we hoed while he helped her down.

"The mule won't guide," says Lady Bridget. "And I'm not afraid—it's all this miserable saddle. I'd be all right on an English saddle."

"Don't try to guide your mule!" says Slim as patient as a kindergarten teacher. "I told you not to try to guide him. Just let the reins lie loose. You've been holding up the whole party by keeping your reins tight—well, all right, walk then!"

And we commenced going along down slowly, Lady Bridget ahead of the party and prolonging the agony for all the rest of us, but not giving a darn so long as she had her own way.

"Say, Slim," I yelled as Nap for the third time tried to brush me off on a convenient bush, showing no gratitude for past favors—like most bribe takers—"say, Slim, how much further to the halfway house?"

"About three miles!" he yells back. "Getting scared?"

"Oh, no, I am happy as a bird!" I says, and just to show how brave I was I commenced singing that well-known and appropriate ballad:

There's a long, long trail a-winding
I'm going to see it in my dreams!

"I want to get back on my mule!" called Lady Bridget. And we got her back—somehow—no easy job it was, either. And she pulled the reins up tight again.

"Don't do that!" yelled Slim.

"It's the proper way to ride!" retorted Lady Bridget

Digitized by Google

firmly. "Young man, I have ridden all my life and I ought to know!"

"Well, do you see that heap of stones?" says Slim grimly pointing to one the trail menders had left. "Well, that's where we buried a cow-puncher that tried to guide a mule."

"My word!" said Lady Bridget, impressed for the moment. "Why didn't you bring the poor fellow out and bury him properly in the cemetery?"

"Oh, we never pack 'em out when they die down here," says Slim carelessly. "We just bury 'em where they fall!"

"Tut, tut!" says Her Ladyship over and over again, full of concern. But I noticed she left her mule be after that.

Well, just as I had found out how to stick onto Nap, which was by holding the pummel tight with both hands, they made us get off and walk. Then I seen why the mules slipped so. In fact I also slipped, and there was nothing to hang on to. Then we got mounted again, and I suppose we went through a lot of handsome scenery, but believe me, the finest part of it to me was a couple of brass beds out in the yard at the halfway house. Also a beautiful bubbling spring down there and a handsome dipper to get cold drinking water out of it with.

Well, after a few minutes of personal liberty that heartless cuss Slim herded us onto the mules again and cut us a new lot of switches. Although why in heaven's name them guides give you switches for them mules when brakes is what you most desire is more than I can say. And when we was back in the saddle, which by now felt exactly the way a new shoe does when you put it on again in the morning after the first blister has broke, we set off over the misleading plateau, all unsuspecting the

Digitized by Google

Devil's Corkscrew that lay ahead, Jim and Tom actually enjoying it, and I and Alma in silent misery.

From now on the party was only delayed now and then to pick up the camera fiend, whose camera would get out of control and stop to take a picture, or to let Lady Bridget walk, or demonstrate the way to ride sidesaddle, because she was that kind of a nature. She had started out to ride side, and believe me, she actually ended by doing it!

And after we had gone down to the river over a absolutely impassable place that you couldn't go over without losing your life but did, why we forded three clear-as-crystal streams to the muddy Colorado River, and at length had a chance to admire the grandeur of the scenery and also the grand box luncheon.

There is no use talking, you can't beat the Grand Canyon. It is the only seventh wonder of the world that is absolutely sure to be better than represented. To me, sitting there on the fine white sand of the river's edge and aching all over, it still seemed the gigantic symbol of our national spirit—a perfect monument to our national ideals, and I got an endure-forever feeling out of it that neither I or the dictionary have words to express, but that must be in the heart of every native son that sees the place, and that like understanding can be mutually felt without having to be put down in black and white.

Well, anyways, going up the Bright Angel a person is not so much scared any more, and can look at the views. Also you are slanting forward instead of slanting backward in your saddle. We was all more peaceable going up, and sort of drawn close by our mutual dangerous experience, and real friendly, although previously perfect strangers, and this went even for the camera fiend. But tired? I'll tell the world! Near the top Jim, who was riding behind me, leaned over real kind and tender.

Digitized by Google

"How does the top look to you, old dear?" he says.

"Well," says I, "I always expected to go to heaven, but I never thought I'd do it on a mule."

Pa and Ma Peterkin had come a timid ways down the trail to meet us, but when we actually got on the rim again I didn't stop to brag or for any conversation either. I had several personal things to attend to, not having ridden before in some months, and up in our room at the hotel Jim and I had a swell time comparing our wounds.

I personally myself felt like I had been hung over a picket fence and walloped with a tent pole. You see, during the ride you hold onto your pummel and after the ride the impulse is to hold onto your seating capacity. But in spite of mere passing bodily ailments, my soul felt well exercised and strong, and I thought with a big sensation of pride and superiority of the poor boobs that would fall for that ride to-morrow.

"I don't care if I am a little sore—it was great!" says Jim from the depths of a warm bath. "I wouldn't of missed the Bright Angel Trail for anything, would you?"

"I would not!" I says truthfully. "Because, believe me, if I had missed it ever so slightly, kid, I wouldn't be here now!"

Digitized by Google

XVI

A COUPLE of years ago Jim and I was resting, and one night when we didn't have anything else to do we went to see a opera called Le Propheteer. It was sung in some foreign language, but we could tell what it was about, all right, because a fat man with nothing on but a shirt come out and put up a awful holler, and judging by the hand he got for it it was a complaint about how the Propheteer had taken everything but the shirt away from him, and the audience was in thorough sympathy. And if that was not a true understanding of the piece, why then it took its name from the price of the seats.

Well, anyways, what I am driving at is that this opera had one set in it that looked a whole lot like the country we commenced to get into shortly after we left the Grand Canyon—big, square, canvas-covered-looking mountains and barren rocky plains. In other words, the kind of place the stage manager thinks locusts and wild honey grows in. And I'll say I had an awful fluttery feeling in my middle, because the desert, which had been more or less hanging over us the whole trip like an investigation over a Tammany administration or a sword over a Damocles, whatever it was, had now come to be a reality instead.

A night in a tiny little town on the beginnings of the real rough country, but with private tiled baths as per usual, and a dead robber lying where the sheriff had shot him down, which was luckily at the undertaker's shop, where he had been caught in the act of breaking in, did nothing to calm my fears; the more so as we had a blow-out and got into town at midnight, which is a spooky hour,

Digitized by Google

anyways. But Jim says don't be a fool, his ghost can't walk yet, because this is where you turn back your watch one hour and it is only eleven in this burg.

Well, I want to say one thing about this town we was in and all these other little railroad towns out in the far places, and that is, I wish Trotzky, Lenine and our parlor pinks could see just once the way our poor downtrodden railroad workers live in them, with private baths in a waterless country where it has to be brought for hundreds of miles, and food at ten to fifty cents a portion that is too good to set before a king and almost suitable for a chorus girl's supper! And how these poor toilers own their own homes along the line—a house and three or four acres and often a share in a ranch, too, with real-estate values going up every month.

Everybody out in these parts is at one and the same time a worker, a capitalist and a bourgeoisie—literally everybody. Why, even most of the Mexis that work on the roads is landholders! It does seem strange to me that when the newspaper editors and the highbrows start talking about the workers of America no mention is ever made of the fact that so much of the country lives under circumstances as per see above. I just don't understand the omission. You would think that they would first of all mention these remarkable truths; but no, they love to wring agony out of some exception that they take as proving a standard instead of proving the rule. But leave me go on record as stating the true fact that if modern plumbing is, as I believe it to be, a fair gauge of industrial health, this country is from coast to coast in a remarkably sanitary condition. City papers please copy.

Well, anyways—oh, boy, wasn't it warm when we come over the naked mountains to Peach Springs, and Lord knows why they call it that when there is neither a peach or a spring in sight and water for your radiator is twenty-

Digitized by Google

five cents! And then through a burning land where the sun is busy fusing the rocks under the barren earth into gold and silver, to Kingman.

Of course I like to look decent and all that, and I had washed the night before, and only wore my waist two days, but when I got the first breath of the old desert, believe me, I just resigned all pretending to keep my make-up on, and when a woman which is accustomed to wearing it in all weather leaves her face run around undressed, without even a kimono of powder on it, you may know conditions is unusual, and that I had by now become a thorough tourist. At least I thought I had until I saw the four flivvers.

We was coming over a bed of volcano cinders, Tom driving and I and Jim busily and openly rubbing our sunburned noses with cold cream to keep them from getting any worse, although we felt that worse was really impossible, because we now knew how a lobster feels when he is boiled alive. And we was also feeling that now we was completely demoralized and to hell with appearances we must have our comfort and that we had descended to the lowest depths of personal carelessness, when, as I say, we saw the four flivvers ahead, and learned that no matter how low a Colby-Droit outfit could sink, the inhabitants of flivvers could go them one better, and again I had to in a way envy them because of this.

You see, the further out in the West you get the longer the stretches are between places, and so a sort of mutual-aid society springs up among the camping tourists. They get to traveling together in groups of two to even six or eight cars, so that if anything happens to one bus, why the others all get out and help. Which is a fine thing, especially fifty miles from the nearest garage.

Well, these four flivvers ahead of us was such a mutual-benefit volunteer society, and just as we come over the ridge the first one got stuck in the sand. Right away I

Digitized by Google

learned what comfort and back to Nature was, because in another moment there was a nightgown party in full swing in the middle of the public road. From every car boiled out two or three women in nightgowns carrying axes or hatchets and men in undershirts and pants and nothing else, except also a weapon. I'll tell the world it was some sight, and at first we thought a private war had been declared, but the brush was all that they attacked, and did it with a right good will, with the thermometer at—no kidding—one hundred and ten above zero.

"Well," says Jim as we passed them, there is advantages in being unknown to fame! Gee, I'd like to wear pajamas!"

"Ain't it strange to see people acting natural?" I says. And the bunch having refused any help from us, we went on our way, and by noon, at one hundred and fifteen above in the shade, we come into Kingman, a big mining town on the far edge of Arizona, and I want to make a few remarks about it. I don't know did anything or any place give me a stronger sense of how closely linked up this vast country really is, for all it is spread over such a lot of ground.

We come into it out of valleys where the heat haze floated like a veil between the bleak mountains-country that looked like it had nothing in it. But, say, it has gold and silver and copper and even diamonds in it! Only you would never guess it from the outside, and believe me, the man who ate the first lobster had nothing on the bravery of the first prospectors who thought there might be something worth having in those mountains, and went out and looked and found they was right. And you also got to hand it to the fellows who are out there right now working those mines. I don't care how many modern machines and so forth they have, they are a brave and strong-hearted race. It takes a he man to do a job out there yet.

Digitized by Google

When you leave Kingman you get into even more desert country. But Kingman itself is in hourly touch with Wall Street, New York. Why, when I went into the big cool cavern of the hotel there I had forgotten there was a Wall Street! Never having done any gambling in it, but always buying outright and preferably Liberty Bonds, at that, why, I'll say I was never so interested in that well-known street as I was while in the Kingman hotel.

There in the lobby was a big blackboard with a feller reading a ticker and chalking up prices, and a bunch of others hanging around watching just like a New York broker's office. The only thing different was that in Kingman they had a long counter with generous specimens of the actual ore out of the actual mines, whereas in New York, well, you know, it's like choosing a candidate because you heard he was a blond. Still it gave me a thrill and a real we-are-together feeling to get that actual touch of the big town way out here on the desert. And it sure seemed strange, too, to think that all this had to be done before we could have money for the banks. A person walking into a big Fifth Avenue bank and asking the bird in the gilded cage for some kale, and getting it in fresh green bank notes don't often think of the boys that dig out the actual gold. No, nor do the ones who buy a vanity or a cigarette case, either. All they think of is to kick about the price. I, however, for one, will never forget that brave little city of people who were wresting riches out of the jealous earth. Nor will I ever forget the perfect apple pie I had at luncheon there, either, which was good in itself, but when I had them a-la-mode it, oh, boy!

Well, I got one thing against that town, however, and that was the short cut which a garage guardian told us to take by way of Oatman, where not oatmeal but gold ore comes from, and Goldroad, where believe me the roads may be made of gold, but if so it is still in the rough—

Digitized by Google

in other words nine-tenths is of worthless rock of no value except to the tire and spring manufacturers. Heaven is also advertised as being paved with gold, but if it is paved with gold in the same way as Goldroad, Arizona, believe me, I would rather go to the other place and ride over good intentions. However, in a way it was interesting. The towns looked exactly like they had been put up for a set and then just left to the wind and weather to pose in after the picture was made. I had to keep my mind tight onto the fact that these strange, bleak mountains were full of kale and berries to keep from being depressed by the fact that there was no other growth on them, because this part of the country is more interesting than beautiful while you are in among it.

But when we ferried the Colorado River and come in towards Needles, past Indian hogans, and I suppose they make the Indians live in them as a just punishment for having started the bead-necklace epidemic—well, anyways, after we crossed the Colorado River and looked back at those black mountains, behold in the sunset the gold was shining clear through them! They were no longer dark and threatening, but bright, burnished yellow, alluring, dazzling and showing for a few moments the full measure of their promise. Even the bowl of Oraibi Valley was not so golden as those towering peaks in the sunset, and I thought by heaven ain't that strange, here the very minute we set wheel base on California soil, or rather sand, the world turns golden, just like the ordinarily unreliable real-estaters say. And beautiful oasis that Needles turned out to be, with palm trees and green grass and buganvilla and everything. I could not look at it while the light was on those mountains. I felt truly what the old poet in the Bible meant when he talked about lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my strength. Only in this case it was not only a spiritual beauty that a person could

Digitized by Google

get out of the hills, but something mighty substantial as well, which is true of a lot of American scenery.

Well, at the commencement of this trip I had got a pretty fair picture in my mind of what the desert—the well-known Moe Harvey—was going to be like. I may not of started out in life with a whole lot of education, but I got a little rubbed off onto me in Public School Number Six, and some of it come off the geography book. So I knew that the prohibitionist symbol was a product of the desert, the same as the Republican was the product of Africa and the Democratic the product of their own state of mind. Not that I seriously expected to see many camels on the Moe Harvey, because I supposed they was probably mostly killed off by now the same as the buffalo. But I did think I might see one or two maybe, on the distant sand dunes.

Also I expected sand. I don't mean bushes—sage and mesquite and Russian thistle and cactus, but regular sand like the beach, only more so, and how the underslung, four-thousand-lb. Colby was going through it I didn't know. When the Peterkins come into town shortly after dark I envied them their bus, even though they had to put it in the hospital directly and then commence a several days' wait hanging around to find out the result of the operation. When they would again be ready to go on they would have a cinch, while with us—well, all I could hope was that some friendly prospector would come prospecting along and brighten our prospects with a little water before we died of thirst up to our hubs in the burning knife cleaner.

When I first left home I also expected maybe we would see a few American Arabs and maybe see a real original shimmy in the cool shade of some grove of palm-leaf fans on a oasis. I expected I would see skeletons both human and animal scattered along the toilsome way, little knowing at the time that the only skeletons we would spot was

Digitized by Google

skeletons of canned peaches and the empty, dying bodies of pop bottles. As for the Arabs and shimmies—well, we had to hit the coast for that, and by "coast" I mean Barbary, San Francisco, and the old town isn't as dead as they let on. I afterward spent long minutes watching just that stuff. California minutes are longer than Eastern minutes, you know—bigger minutes—watch 'em grow!

Well, anyways, these are a few of the terrors and pleasures which I had fully expected to find on Moe's reservation, and when we started out from Needles next day after saying to the Peterkins good-by we will see you in Los Angeles, I hope your carburetor is better soon, why of course we expected to have in plain Esperanto a hellofa time, and for a few miles out our fears come true. And after that there was a paved road.

Just give a look at that sentence, will you, and leave it digest! And when it has sunk in thoroughly I will admit that the road had also sunk in in spots, or rather not so much sunk in as been sanded over by sand storms. Don't get away with the idea that the going was perfect, because it was not. Every now and then, but more often now, the sand would be well blown over by the wind, and getting the car through this was like digging little Arthur out from under the nice sand castle that has fallen on him, and doing it with a hairpin. But the big thing to remember is that across that vast desert, which is a real genuine desert all right, even if there are no camels on it and it has stuff growing over most of it, the big thing is that there should be a road of any kind, much less a paved one! We were in California now, and I guess the Southern California Automobile Club meant we should know it. And we sure did. They tried to work a miracle, and they have pretty near done it.

But outside of this streak of civilization the desert was as deserted as you please. Even the prairie dogs

Digitized by Google

laid down on the job. Time hangs waiting over this desert like a veil that may some day be lifted. I personally myself hope not. That is, not all of it. I got to hand it to the dry farmers who are blossoming it like the rose. But oh, I want a lot of it left barren and untouched except for a good road, just the way it is! I want those mountains on either hand to go on in an eternal demonstration of how they were since the flood receded, so that people, including myself, can go there and drink in the air of big untamed spaces and grow strong-hearted doing it. I want to keep untouched the long valleys filled with faint colors and the living ghosts of dead ages, where nothing built by man stands to remind a person of how very little man knows, and where the soul can go out through the eyes and grow big wandering down this wide corner of the virgin world. And a lot of queer things like that that may be slush but are true and important.

There are two kinds of people who cross the desert. The ones who immediately fall for it and never recover, and the ones who never fall for it and want to get off of it immediately. And these two classes hold each other in equal contempt.

As was to be expected in man and wife, we took sides, I and Jim, just naturally falling under these two heads, he on the con and I on the pro side. To say he hated that desert is to put it into the only language fit for a lady to use, and I'll tell the world he did not let it go at any such mild expression.

"Jim Smith, I don't see how you can feel that way about it!" I says as we skimmed along the edge of a brown mesa with a violet valley stretching out below. "Why you got no sensitiveness at all! Now when I get home I am going to be lonesome for this desert."

"Sensitive?" says Jim, pointing at a huge old volcano crater as black as ink with also inklike bowlders laying all

Digitized by Google

around it for miles. "Sensitive? Lonesome for that? Say, listen, kid, when I get lonesome for the Moe Harvey desert at home I'm gonner put on my smoked glasses, go down in the cellar and get the furnace man to shake me around on the cinder shaker while I throw lumps of coal around and holler 'Ah, Moe Harvey!'"

Which is all the vision some people have got!

Tom didn't say much, but I got a feeling he sort of sided with Jim. I suppose it kind of reminded Tom of the lower East Side, it was so different. But I felt never mind whether he likes it or not, he is seeing it, and the mere size of it will register in his mind if nothing else does, along with the other eyefuls of U. S. A. units that he has now been for weeks going across, and it will impress him, whether he knows it or not. And just while I was thinking this in the late afternoon, and we still on the desert east of Barstow, my mind all at ease and yet feeling a little sad, because with any kind of luck to-morrow would be our last day, and then we would be in California and I got by now a sort of feeling like I could go on driving in the Colby forever with no amen. The sort of feeling you get when you have been driving a car for hours and hours. You get a kind of second wind. Your hands are glued to the wheel, your feet are frozen to the pedals with fatigue; you feel like you had grown to the seat yet you get a strange sort of second strength that makes you want to keep on and on and then some.

Well, I was having this same sensation about our journey, only more in my brain than in my body, when all at once I looked back and saw a red car almost a mile away, but traveling fast and gaining on us every minute. Now I had just naturally got to have a hateful, suspicious feeling towards every red car that come into sight, but also I had come to realize that as a rule it was a false alarm, and so when this far-distant one crawled over the edge of

Digitized by Google

the pass and started down the trail toward us I says to myself, now don't be a fool. It is probably only two old maids from Oshkosh or a bride and groom from Florida touring out here where it is cooler. Tom was driving and I sitting next to him, with Jim and Welcome in back.

Ahead of us, lay, if not camels, at least a long rolling series of camel's-hump hills with deep washes and sandy going in between. Not a building of any kind or even another tourist had been in sight for over an hour when I spotted that red bus. But instead of mentioning it I just turned my head back.

"Tom," I says, "if you don't step on her a little I expect we are going to sleep in the open."

"And if I step on her too much on this stretch we are going to be mere canyon fodder," says Tom.

"It's a good joke—I was always fond of it," I says. "But I'd like to get to Barstow to-night, just the same."

I don't know what I hoped for out of Barstow, but I had a feeling we might be safer there. I had a uneasy hunch that the bus might prove our finish this time. And don't tell me woman's intuition is always pure nervous imagination, because in another minute Jim, who had been dozing but was woke up by our talk, stirred around to change his position among the uneasy bags and curse because the golf clubs had hit him a wallop, and in doing so took a slant through the place where the back window in the top had been before the isinglass fell out.

"Beat it!" he yells. "There are those cops!"

"Are you sure?" I says.

"Oy, gevalt!" says Tom, very low-voiced, but from his heart.

"Sure I'm sure!" says Jim, watching still. "And believe me, they are getting nearer every second! Step on her, Tom, you poor fish, step on her!"

"What's the use?" says Tom, but stepping on her just

Digitized by Google

the same, and at that minute the red car commenced honking for us to stop.

But we didn't—not then. Tom hunched down at the wheel and opened her up wide, me driving with him in spirit, every nerve working overtime and not daring to look back. But a few hundred feet was all that this lasted. When the bulls found that honking was no good they got earnest, and suddenly the vast silence was broken by a revolver shot.

"It's no good bucking that!" says Tom grimly, sluing in the sand to an abrupt stop. "The jig is up, I guess!"

And at that minute Jim got to his feet with a yell.

"Look, look!" he hollered.

With my knees sort of gone to jelly, I climbed out of the front seat to see, expecting murder at the very least. But what I seen was more of a shock yet.

The red car had stopped twenty feet behind us, and it was our red car all right, and it had the same two fellers in it all right, the big one with the red face and the little one with the spinach. This small bird was the driver, and the other one was standing up in the car and he was shooting. Shooting right at me! Shooting a perfectly good motion-picture camera!

"Hold that on the step!" he yelled as I started to move. "Keep that surprise! Hold it! Hold it—twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six—that'll do, thanks! Much obliged!"

And then he left off grinding and got out of the car, coming forward and mopping his face with a big silk handkerchief, while I just stood numb with surprise.

"Well, Miss La Tour, you folks sure have given us some chase!" said he. "But believe me, we got footage of you that you are going to like! That narrow escape on the Raton is a bear! Released yesterday, it was, and Al wired us that it went over big!"

"Who—and what are you?" I says weakly.

Digitized by Google

"Yes, who?" says Jim.

"Henry Lock!" says the big bird. "Gonner shoot your Shakspere script for you, Miss La Tour. And this is Mr. Williams, my driver. Pleased to make your acquaintance!"

"Then you're not a bull?" says Jim, sort of feebly.

"Not by any means!" says Mr. Lock, looking at me queerly.

"And you never were a cop?" I says, hardly able to believe my own ears.

"Never!" says he.

"Then meet my friend Mr.—my chauffeur," I says, relievedly introducing Tom.

"Pleased to meetcher," says Lock. "Say, Miss La Tour, now we have caught up, we might as well work together on the finish of this stuff, eh?"

"What do you mean?" I says. "I'll say there is an explanation coming to me!"

"Well, no harm to tell it now, I guess," says Mr. Lock. "You see, Mr. Goldringer thought that as long as he was paying your expenses out on this trip he might as well get something out of it. It was using up a month of your time and a lot of his money, but he knew you had objected strongly to any publicity on the trip, so he got the idea of getting some pictures of you driving to the coast to make Romeo and Juliet, or the Secret Marriage, as I believe the screen version is to be called."

"So you—he—they—oh, it's a outrage!" I gasped. "So you been sneaking around making pictorial news out of me and releasing the stuff without my consent!"

"'Sneaking around' is hardly the word," says Lock. "You led us the hottest chase I ever see! And, yes, the stuff has been released in the news pictures and you won't be sorry. Why, the first one they showed got the biggest hand since the shots of Karl Westman being deported!"

Digitized by Google

No kidding, wasn't that a bomb? I'll allow it was! When it, as you might say, exploded in our midst the shock left us helpless, and for a moment without a word to our name. Then Tom come forward with another high-powered explosive.

"So it's happened! Thank God!"

"You knew it would?" says I excitedly. "You expected it?"

"I was the one material witness that could have saved him from being deported," says Tom. "And I wanted him to go. Without me, I knew they would get just enough on him in connection with that explosion to send him back to Russia. And I wouldn't help to keep him in —in my country! We don't want men with ideas like his over here!"

Well, at that something leaped up inside me—my heart, I guess, and I looked at Tom with it all in my eyes.

"You did it!" he says, understanding without a word.

"The country did it!" says I. And then Lock butted in.

"Who is this guy?" he says, pointing at Tom.

"I'll tell you that," I says, remembering something, "if you will tell me why you stopped us by firing a gun at us?"

"Gun?" says Lock. "Gun? That wasn't a gunshot —that was a blow-out!"

Digitized by Google

XVII

ACCORDING to the wets, it is easier for a rich man to pass through the eye of a needle than for a camel to enter the kingdom of heaven. And if this is the truth, then I am glad not to be a camel, because I would never of got into California. Anyway, that's what I felt like at the top of the Cajon Pass, beyond Barstow next day, when I caught my first look at the lived-in part of the Golden State and found the picture post cards had not lied to me.

You come to the top of this pass over a desert full of strange cactuses that twist and yearn towards heaven, but will never reach it. These are called Judas trees, and Indians think they are the tortured souls of people who have died. But I know different. They are just trees that are tormented because they can't get across the mountain and into the San Bernardino Valley.

I am not going to hand you any description of California. They have got plenty of people out there who will do that with very little urging, and you already know what they will say, so all I will do is to add that no matter how good it sounds, it's even better in reality.

I personally myself will say merely that the meat of the trip across the country is not, surprisingly, the main course, and California is the dessert. Coming into it is just as if they suddenly brought on baked Alaska when you were beginning to be afraid there wasn't going to be anything more served.

And outside of that I have nothing to add except that it's got the loveliest scenery, the best roads, the grandest studios, orchards, architecture and anything else you want

Digitized by Google

to name, and besides that the folks out there have got the most contagious enthusiasm over living of any people in the world.

All this and more I appreciated before I reached Riverside, with its flower-laden streets.

Also I appreciated that the light and the climate was going to be ideal to make a early Italian picture of the Shaksperean era in. And that it was a grand thing that Tom should take out his second papers there and that Alma, when she married him, would at once become one of those typical big beautiful California girls that generally are born in Maine.

I appreciated how my pink acquaintances back in provincial New York City, Miss Rosa Gratz and Mr. Crabtree, her husband, and Lulu Wildhack was all not a real menace, as I had set out supposing them to be, but only soiled puppets that would break to pieces in this clean air, and look pretty cheap and faded if they were brought out into the sunlight.

I also appreciated what a big live wire of a town Los Angeles is, and how pretty Hollywood is, with its houses all built with a teaspoon and a bottle of vanilla extract. But of all the things in California, I appreciated most the fact that my baby was there waiting for me in a vanilla house with strawberry trimming and that when we drove up to it ma was standing on the top step holding him out to me all fat and rosy and crowing. And he knew me! He remembered me! I'll tell the world I forgot everything but him when I took him to my heart!

"Well, did you see America, dearie?" says ma.

"Oh, ma, I thought I did!" I says over the kid's shoulder as I held him to me tight. "I thought I did; but now—oh, ma, here is America right in my arms! And believe me, that's just exactly where it is, after all—in every American mother's arms! I don't intend ever to leave him

Digitized by Google

again, ma. I'll let Jim do the work from now on, and put in my time raising this kid to be a fit citizen worthy of the country I've just come across. I'll never leave him any more!"

"Well, there's a telephone from the studio," says ma, "saying please call up as soon as you get in and say when will you go to work!"

"Go telephone them——" I began, firmly at first, but weakening even as I spoke, because work did listen good to me. "Go tell them that I'll come to-morrow morning. A contract is a contract. Americans need to remember that just now more than ever. I guess maybe, after all, I've got two contracts—my baby and my job. And with God's help I'll fill them both!"

"Oh, well, I'll help a little, dearie," says ma.

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google